



Thoughts, Notes and Answers - Part 2

Acts 10:38 ... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

HARVEST TIME

Part 1: Studies 6-10

Thoughts, Notes and Answers

Program

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This set of studies will come out in two parts.

Studies 5-10 will be published in due time.

BOOKS (a longer list.)

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- Schreiner, P., Matthew, Disciple and Scribe. The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2019).
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Study 6: Matthew 12:1-14

Harvest Lord

Before You Start

What should you do and what shouldn't you do on a Sunday?

For discussion.

Worth considering how this has changed over the course of our lifetimes.

Listen Carefully to Matthew 12:1-14

Carson EBC): *“Opposition to Jesus had already surfaced (9:3, 11, 14, 34; 10:25; 11:19). Now it erupts in a concrete issue that generates enough hatred to lead Jesus’ enemies to contemplate murder (v. 14).”*

Blomberg (TNAC): *“Matthew 12:1-14 is linked to 11:25-30 by the contrast between the yoke of discipleship and the yoke of the law and by the theme of rest.”*

The Text

1. What were the disciples doing in the grain fields? What was the Pharisees’ reaction?

They were picking some heads of grain and eating them.

On a very strict view this is ‘reaping’ or harvesting the grain.

[Workers in the harvest ?!?!?!]

The Pharisees see this and say that this is not lawful on the Sabbath.

They must have been watching very carefully!

2. What examples does Jesus use to reply to them?

Jesus uses four arguments.

David eating the shewbread.

The priests ‘working’ on the Sabbath.

God’s priorities.

Jesus’ status

3. Where does Jesus go next? What challenge is presented to him there?

Next we find Jesus in the Synagogue.

The sabbath gathering place of the Jews.

The challenge is occasioned by a man, in attendance, who has a shriveled hand.' The challenge itself comes from the Pharisees, we assume from the previous passage, who ask is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath.

Blomberg (TNAC): *"Interestingly the Pharisees' question presupposed their belief that Jesus could genuinely heal the man."*

4. What does Jesus do for the man with the shrivelled hand? What is the reaction?

He 'restores' the man's hand. That this restoration is complete is emphasised.

France (TNTC): *"The healing is almost incidental to the main point of the story, but the command to stretch out an unmovable hand neatly illustrates the faith which was the correlative to Jesus' healing power."*

The man was probably pleased and the synagogue attendees impressed but ...

The Pharisees rather plot murder.

Carson (EBC): *"This first mention of a plot to kill Jesus springs from disputes not about the legality of various Sabbath activities but about Jesus' authority. The Sabbath conflicts are not the cause of the plotting but its occasion."*

Connections

1. What laws are involved in the incident in the grain fields.

Osborne (ZECNT) on the disciples picking grain: *"Travelers were allowed to do so (Lev 19:9–10; Deut 23:24–25), but this was the Sabbath. Complex Sabbath laws were in place. The OT only stipulated that the Sabbath was to be holy and a day of rest from work (Exod 20:8–11 = Deut 5:12–15), but the Jewish people needed directions on what constituted work on the Sabbath, so the Mishnah developed thirty-nine rules on what could or could not be done then. They were strict enough that a mishnaic tract said, "The rules for the Sabbath are like mountains hanging by a hair, for Scripture is scanty and the rules many.""*

2. In verses 6 and 8 what is Jesus claiming?

He is claiming to be

Greater than the temple

And

Lord of the Sabbath.

The loftiness of these claims would not be missed by the Pharisees – and all around.

These are Messianic claims.

Blomberg (TNAC): *“Verse 8 brings the dialogue to its logical climax Jesus’ sovereign authority will determine how the Sabbath is now fulfilled in the kingdom age.”*

Carson (EBC): *“In all three Synoptics, the Son of Man is David’s son, Jesus the Messiah. But the title is ambiguous enough that few would grasp the point until after the resurrection, at which time few could miss it. The claim (v. 8) is implicitly messianic, a claim that goes beyond the mere right to tamper with halakah (rules of conduct based on traditional interpretations of the law). It places the Son of Man in a position to handle the Sabbath law any way he wills, or to supersede it in the same way that the temple requirements superseded the normal Sabbath restrictions.”*

3. In verse 7 what is Jesus urging on the Pharisees?

He is urging them to return to God’s priorities.

France (TNTC): *“The third argument repeats the appeal to Hosea 6:6 already found in 9:13. Its aim is not, any more than in Hosea, to repudiate ceremonial observance, but to establish God’s order of priorities. God cannot be quoted in support of the attitude which condemns before it understands, which puts demands before consideration. ‘God is no longer primarily understood as the demanding one, but as the gracious one, the merciful one’ This scriptural argument in Matthew thus achieves the same effect as the pronouncement ‘The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath’ (Mark 2:27), which it replaces. The disciples were guiltless not in that they had not infringed the scribal regulations, but in that they did so on their Master’s authority; hence the for which begins the next verse.”*

4. What point is Jesus making in v11-12? How is this similar to what he says in v7?

Again here Jesus is stressing God’s priorities for care rather than mere law.

France (TNTC): *“Jesus’ response this time is not to assert his own authority directly, nor to quote an Old Testament example, but to point to the inconsistency of their own practice. They were strict in prohibiting another man’s healing, but not where their own property was concerned.”*

Impact

1. Note the Pharisees reaction in v14. What does this mean for them? Note 11:21-24.

They have now set themselves on a track which will lead to the crucifixion of Jesus by the Roman authorities.

MATTHEW 10-12: HARVEST TIME

They have set themselves on the path to Judgment.

2. **Tom Wright asks “What systems are currently in danger of being exalted over the needs of real human beings, in your country, your church, your family? What would it mean for the Son of Man to be master of them?”**

Well worth discussion.

If Matthew is the ‘teacher of the law’ who brings out ‘new treasures as well as old’ (Matthew 13:52), what here is new and what references to the ‘old’ can you see?

The contrast here is plain.

Jesus is in effect the new ‘law’ – He is Lord of the Sabbath and indeed everything else.

Not that the past is done away with (5:17-18) but it is fulfilled in a new and exciting way.

Study 7: Matthew 12:15-21

Harvest Servant

Before You Start

Which would you rather be a servant or the boss?

Discuss

Do you really want to be a servant.

Listen Carefully to Matthew 12:15-21

The Text

1. What does Jesus do (at this stage) in response to the threat from the Pharisees? v15

Jesus perceiving the threat removes himself from 'that place'.

Note 10:14,23.

The time has not yet come for him to confront the threat. There is more kingdom work to be done before that appointed time.

Osborne (ZECNT): *"There may be a further hint of Jesus' demeanor in 12:19; rather than fight back, the gentle Messiah withdraws. Yet there is often a sense of judgment when Jesus withdraws. His enemies have rejected him, so he now turns his back on them, in effect leaving them to their fate. Putting both ideas together, we can say Jesus retreats from the belligerent leaders and leaves judgment up to God."*

2. In v15-16 who goes with him? What does he continue to do?

'Many' follow him – I suspect this just means that they traipse along after Him – not here as committed 'followers' (though perhaps potential 'disciples').

Jesus continues to heal the sick (all that were brought to him)

Jesus compassion contrasts with the Pharisees in the previous passage.

Note that, in keeping with the idea of removing himself from the threat, he warns people not to tell who he was.

3. How is Jesus described in v18-21?

Remember v17-21 are Matthews 'aside' – a bit of commentary if you like on this stage of Jesus' ministry.

He is described as:

- My Servant
- The one I love.
- Has the Spirit

- Proclaims justice.
- Humble and 'weak'
- Will lead justice to victory.
- Hope to the nations.

Wilkins (NIVAC): *"This is a picture of a gentle Servant Messiah, who will not brazenly demand allegiance with his proclamation of justice but will gently and humbly invite those who are the most in need (11:28–30). The double metaphor of a bruised reed and smoldering wick emphasizes that the Servant will compassionately care for those who have been abused and who are about to expire because of misuse—pictures that find relevance in the harassed and helpless (9:36) and the weary and burdened (12:28) who are being oppressed not only by the foreign invading forces of Rome but also by the legalistic burdens from Israel's religious establishment.*

But it is not only for Israel. All "the nations" will put their hope in the name of this Servant, the One who Matthew declares is none other than Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 2:23; 12:21). The "name" in 12:21 stands for the whole of the person, including his identity and mission. Jesus Messiah is a Suffering Servant who is Spirit-endowed and who offers hope, because the advance of the kingdom of heaven promises victory for all the nations of the world."

4. What in v18-21 speaks of Jesus' humility?

A servant

Not shouting

Not harm a bruised reed.

Not put out a smoldering wick.

Connections

1. What promise is in this One?

Justice to the nations.

The victory of justice.

Hope for the nations. (The whole world in fulfillment of Genesis 12:1-3)

Osborne (ZECNT): *"The fulfillment formula (v17) is unique to Matthew and found ten times (1:22–23; 2:15, 17–18, 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4–5; 27:9–10) to indicate Jesus' fulfillment of OT messianic expectations. The emphasis is on God's sovereign control of salvation history in such a way that Jesus is the culmination of his plan.*

2. Look at Isaiah 42 and 52-53. What sort of person is presented there?

These are the servant songs of Isaiah. Where the one spoken about is God's servant – doing God's will.

Osborne (ZECNT): *"The servant songs of Isaiah were already used in 8:17, where Jesus fulfilled Isa 53:4. Matthew clearly emphasizes Jesus as the 'ebed yhwh ("servant of Yahweh," see also 8:17). The suffering Servant is a frequent theme in Matthew and points to Isa 42, 52–53 and the messianic image of the Servant. Here vv. 17–18 are linked closely with Jesus as the humble, gentle messianic King of 11:28–30. There are indications that Isa 42 was used messianically in Judaism, and Matthew considers this a direct fulfillment. This use of Isa 42:1–4 is the longest OT quotation in Matthew ... Many of the details point specifically to themes in this section."*

Blomberg (TNAC): *"In the longest Old Testament quotation in his Gospel, Matthew depicts Jesus as God's suffering servant (Isaiah 42:1-4), who does not fight back against those who oppose him. The heavenly voice quoted part of this text at Jesus' baptism (3:17); here God reaffirms his choice of and love for that Jesus, whom the Spirit anointed (v18)"*

3. Cast your mind forward to Jesus' trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate. How are these prophecies worked out in that context?

Note these verses/phrases from Jesus trials as recorded in Matthew:

26:62 Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 63 But Jesus remained silent.

27:12 When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. 13 Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" 14 But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

Osborne (ZECNT) on v18: *"The Isaianic Servant will not "open his mouth" (Isa 53:7). Jesus' reaction to the loud, insistent opposition of the Pharisees will not be to retaliate verbally. As the humble messianic Servant, Jesus refuses to "retaliate" or "make threats" but rather "entrusts himself to him who judges justly" (1 Pet 2:23). This hardly means Jesus will not speak at all. He will "proclaim justice," but he will not respond to his opponents. The public proclamation will be positive, not negative, related to the good news rather than defending himself against the leaders (the "hypocrites" who in Matt 6:5 pray loudly "on the street corners [to] be seen by others"). This closely fits Jesus' withdrawal and command for silence in vv. 15–16, which Matthew saw fulfilled in the Isaiah quote here. The Servant neither went to "the streets" nor allowed those healed to do so. He proclaimed only God, not himself."*

4. What is the promise in v20c-21?

Victory – the gentiles (nations) included.

Osborne (ZECNT): *“Matthew has omitted the first half of Isa 42:4 to center on this aspect. He is emphasizing, as he did in 8:5–13, that the Gentiles (referring not just to “the nations” but to “the Gentiles” who live in them) are part of God’s plan in fulfillment not only of the Abrahamic covenant but also of the Isaianic prophecies of the procession of the nations to Zion. Jesus the gentle Messiah is the hope of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. It is important to realize that in the very section where Jesus restricts his and the disciples’ ministries to the Jewish people (10:5–6; 15:24), Matthew shows that Jesus’ ultimate intention is to reach the Gentiles as well (see also 1:5–6; 2:1–12; 4:14–16, 25; 8:5–13; 10:18). These are not contradictory but supplementary, as indicated long before in the prophecies of Isaiah.”*

Impact

3. One who will not break a bent twig, will not snuff out a candle that is almost out! How will that one lead ‘justice to victory’?

Short answer: by his sacrificial, substitutionary death on the cross and his RESURRECTION.

Of course this is counter intuitive – strength, power and authority forcefully expressed is what we, and our world, and Jesus world, expects for a victory.

God’s way is different

Still needs discussion.

Wilkins (NIVAC): *“ The Suffering Servant’s advance of justice will not break those who are abused, nor will it smother those who are nearly out of resources; rather, he will provide the ultimate victory for those who respond to the invitation to enter the kingdom. The strong and the mighty are often victorious in this life because they advance their own causes by abusing others and withholding care from the needy. But even as Isaiah knew that evil would not have the ultimate victory, so Matthew points to Jesus and declares that victory is at hand for those who seek God’s justice.”*

4. Given the trying time our nation is going through (I initially wrote this on Jan 2nd when most of the South Coast seems to have been on fire or is on fire) where is your hope? Why?

Discuss

In all of this our hope is in God.

If Matthew is the 'teacher of the law' who brings out 'new treasures as well as old' (Matthew 13:52), what here is new and what references to the 'old' can you see?

The bulk of this passage is the quotes from Isaiah and Matthews application of them to this man, Jesus.

He is the new element and the fulfilling element.

Schreiner (Matthew: Disciple and Scribe): *"Thus, the longest fulfillment quotation in this section and even in the whole Gospel tells of a future king who will be like David. Matthew portrays Jesus as the king who brings Sabbath rest like the chosen servant of the Lord, David.*

Study 8: Matthew 12:22-37

Harvest Slander

Before You Start

What is your reaction when you hear Jesus' name (or God's name) used as a swear word, or as an expletive?

For Discussion

Listen Carefully to Matthew 12:22-37

The Text

- 1. What multiple problems did the man brought to Jesus have? What did Jesus do about it?**

Demon possessed, Blind and mute (dumb). None of which would be much fun now – certainly not in 1st Century Palestine.

We are simply and succinctly told that Jesus healed him.

Now he could both talk and see.

In this passage, however, again, the focus is not on the healing but the reactions to it.

Though I am sure the heal-ee felt it was quite central.

Note the similarities to 9:32-34

- 2. What was the crowd's reaction? What was the Pharisees' reaction? (note 9:33-34).**

As in the previous incident the crowd is amazed and ask the right question.

The Pharisees, again as before, look past the obvious answer and seek to make out that Jesus is in league with the devil.

France (TNTC): *"The reality of Jesus' power was undeniable, so, as in 9:34, it is its source that is questioned. The Pharisees' accusation amounts to a charge of sorcery, one which continued to be levelled against Jesus in later Jewish polemic. It was a serious charge, for sorcery was a capital offence"*

- 3. What two arguments does Jesus use against the Pharisees' reaction?**

First, that the charge is ridiculous – Satan is opposed to God and the defeat of one demon is a blow against Satan. So why on earth would Satan's minion defeat another of his servants.

Second, that there were Jewish exorcists whose work was 'approved' by the Pharisees and was effective. So whose power are they using?

Note in v28 Jesus claims that his power is worked through the 'Spirit of God.'

4. What is the unforgiveable sin (verses 31 and 32)?

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

More on this below.

Connections

1. What is Jesus saying about the Pharisees in v33-37?

There is no possibility of neutrality in this battle of the kingdoms.

If they are not for Jesus, then they stand against Him and the Kingdom of God.

They're basically calling evil, good and good, evil.

What people say and do reflects the attitude of the heart. The warning regarding an unforgivable sin is directed mainly at them.

2. "Blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." What is this unforgivable sin? Does this worry you?

I believe that it is an intractable and persistent opposition to the work of God (his Spirit) in the world.

It needs to be said that if you are worried that you may have committed it then you most definitely have NOT.

Wilkins (NIVAC): *"This passage has caused many unknowing believers anguish, thinking that somehow they have committed this sin through a verbal assault on the Holy Spirit, resulting in eternal condemnation. Rather, this is a heart sin of unchangeable rejection whereby the Jewish leaders rejected the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Ralph Martin comments:*

The verse is a solemn warning against persistent, deliberate rejection of the Spirit's call to salvation in Christ. Human unresponsiveness inevitably leads to a state of moral insensibility and to a confusion of moral issues wherein evil is embraced as though it were good... . In such a frame of mind repentance is not possible to the hardened heart because the recognition of sin is no longer possible, and God's offer of mercy is in effect peremptorily refused.

This sin can be committed today only by unbelievers who reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit leading them to salvation. To the believer who fears that he or she has committed this sin, Cranfield says wisely, "It is a matter of great importance pastorally that we can say with absolute confidence to anyone who is overwhelmed by the fear that he has committed this sin, that the fact that he is so troubled is itself a sure proof that he has not committed it."

Jesus continues the offensive by distinguishing between rejection of him and the rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit: "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." To speak against the Son of Man implies that a person does not know the full identity of Jesus. Through greater revelation and understanding, that deficiency can be overcome, the person can repent, and the person can then find forgiveness of sin. By yielding to the Spirit's evidential and convicting work a person can be led to that very point. But to reject continually the Spirit's work will result in a person never being able to reach that point.

Ultimately, once a person has either hardened his or her heart to an irretrievable point in this life or has died without repenting, the chance for forgiveness has passed. It is only what one does in this life that matters for eternity. Thus the only true "unpardonable sin" is when a person consciously, willfully, rejects the operation of the Spirit bearing witness to the reality of Jesus as the Savior. The person who does not receive this work of the Spirit cannot come to Jesus and therefore cannot receive forgiveness."

3. Note 12:30 and compare 11:21 and 12:14. What challenge does Jesus present here?

The Verses

12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

11:21 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Matthew 12:14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Osborne (ZECNT): *"In the cosmic war against Satan no one can be neutral — there are no Switzerlands!"*

France (TNTC) *"In this conflict neutrality is impossible. To be against Jesus (as the Pharisees were showing themselves to be) is to be on Satan's side. Gather and scatter do not represent specific actions (e.g. gathering God's people — so Bonnard), but constitute a vivid metaphor to reinforce the 'slogan' of the first half of the verse. The reversed form of this slogan in Mark 9:40 (though its effect is, in context, less polemical) equally excludes the middle ground."*

4. In v23 the people ask “Could this be the Son of David?” (Note Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 5:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15; 22:42) What does this title say about Jesus?

The important think here is to note the connection to the Royal line of Israel (descended from David) and thus the fulfillment, ultimately in Jesus, of the promises in 2 Samuel 7:11b-16

Osborne (ZECNT): *“The “Son of David” title is a favorite of Matthew, especially in healing stories, and points to Jesus as the royal Messiah who has compassion and heals. The people are filled with wonder, feeling that they may have encountered the Messiah.”*

Wilkins (NIVAC): *“The people are astonished at Jesus’ healing of this blind and mute demoniac, so they exclaim, “Could this be the Son of David?” (12:23). Different Jewish groups had difficulty putting together all of the varied messianic promises of the Old Testament (e.g., prophet, priest, king). The common people especially seemed to focus on David as warrior and king, so that the messianic son of David would be a liberator. Thus, they are perplexed here and ask, “Can the coming Messiah be both a liberator and an exorcist?” Although David was not considered a miracle worker, he is the only person recorded to have exorcised a demon in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 16:14–23). It is perhaps stretching the crowds’ understanding to comprehend that this gentle healing person (8:17; 12:18–21) is indeed the Son of David who will shepherd his people and bring the time of covenantal peace (Ezek. 34:23–31; 37:24–28).”*

It is worth noting that in Matthew 1:20 Joseph (Mary’s husband) is called by this title.

Impact

1. Does the power of Satan worry you? Re-read the passage and see who it is who has the real power both temporally and spiritually?

We should be aware of the fact that we are involved in a spiritual battle as Ephesians 6 reminds us. We need to be alert but not alarmed. Jesus has won the war and wins all the battles. His Kingdom Rules.

Blomberg (TNAC): *“The exorcisms demonstrate that God in Christ is decisively defeating the devil. As has been often noted, D-Day has come, though not yet V-Day. Satan is in his death throes. His last flurry of activity, to change the metaphor, is like that of a chicken (or perhaps better a snake!) with its head cut off.”*

2. Note carefully v37. Discuss the power of words?

We need to be careful with our tongue (Note James 3:1-12).

Discuss

If Matthew is the 'teacher of the law' who brings out 'new treasures as well as old' (Matthew 13:52), what here is new and what references to the 'old' can you see?

The reference to 'Son of David' is important here.

Jesus is the new Davidic King but not quite in the way that one was expected.

It is worth considering that Matthew includes in this chapter in close proximity reference to Jesus as 'servant' (v18) and as King (v23)

Study 9: Matthew 12:38-45

Harvest Sign

Before You Start

We live in an age that seems to want ‘physical’ proof before it will believe anything. What is your attitude to this?

For Discussion.

Listen Carefully to Matthew 12:38-45

The Text

1. What do the Pharisees now ask for? What might be their motivation?

They want a ‘miraculous sign’.

Blomberg (TNAC): “... they wanted to see a less ambiguous miracle that could come only from God. One wonders what would have done the trick.”

Note Matthew 16:1-4

Osborne (ZECNT): “Jesus, of course, will never produce a wondrous event just to draw attention to himself (see the temptation narrative of 4:1–11), especially when the demand comes from a position of rejection. Their insolence is obvious.”

France (TNTC): “the sign they require is some authentication of Jesus’ message and claims which will be more impressive than the healings and exorcisms they have seen and rejected (see v. 24).”

Osborne (ZECNT): “In Matthew “teacher” (διδάσκαλε) is usually used by Jesus’ opponents (8:19; 9:11; 17:24; 22:16, 24, 36; though cf. 26:18), and while respectful (= “rabbi”), it shows they refuse to accept his claim to be Messiah.”

2. What is Jesus’ response?

First, he rebukes and then tells them there will be a sign.

The sign of Jonah.

Wilkins (NIVAC): “The problem with a sign is that it can be interpreted in different ways.²² The Pharisees here ask Jesus to perform some kind of on-demand spectacular display of power that will irrefutably convince them that his power is from God, not from Satan. However, although their request appears innocent enough, they are not asking in good faith. They are asking for a sign that they can use against him. Jesus has already performed many miracles publicly, some of which the Pharisees have witnessed first-hand (cf. 12:9–14). If the Pharisees were open to God’s message, they would have accepted that Jesus truly is the Messiah. Instead, their hard hearts have rejected the miracles’ authenticating power, and they have used those same

miracles as the basis of the charge that he is a satanic tool (12:24). Jesus recognises their evil motive, so he refuses to fall into their trap of giving them further ammunition for their charges against him.”

3. Which two/three Old Testament characters are invoked?

Jonah and ‘the Queen of the South’/Solomon

Wilkins (NIVAC): *“In sum, the three ways in which Jesus is greater than the temple, the prophet Jonah, and wise king Solomon (12:6, 41, 42) elevate Jesus’ person, proclamation, and inauguration of the kingdom to be greater than, and therefore the fulfillment of, the three greatest institutions in Israel— priest, prophet, king. Jesus’ arrival with the kingdom of God has exceeded all that Israel has witnessed in her history. But tragically, and ironically, the Gentiles see what the Pharisees and that fateful generation do not.”*

4. What parable does Jesus tell in v43-45?

He speaks of demons and a ‘house’ (‘Man’ in v43 and 45)

Connections

1. What is the sign of the Prophet Jonah? What does it mean? In what way is Jesus greater than Jonah?

In essence the sign of the Prophet Jonah is Jesus’ death and resurrection.

When it comes the Jews are called on to recognise it as the sign they sought.

France (TNTC): *“Jewish interest in the book of Jonah focused on the fish episode in chapters 1-2, not on the preaching to Nineveh in chapters 3-4 (which will be taken up in v. 41), so the ‘sign of Jonah’ would naturally be interpreted, as this verse demands (cf. Jon. 1:17 [2:1, Heb.]), in terms of Jonah’s deliverance, even where, as in Luke 11:30, the parallel is not explicitly drawn out. The point is, then, that Jesus, like Jonah, will undergo an experience which will be a ‘sign’ of his divine commission; the preaching of the early church duly drew this conclusion from the resurrection (Acts 2:22–36; 4:10–11; etc.). Three days and three nights was a Jewish idiom appropriate to a period covering only two nights. The heart of the earth probably refers to Sheol, the place of the dead (cf. Jon. 2:2, ‘the belly of Sheol’ – Jonah was rescued from the prospect of death, Jesus from death itself).”*

Jesus is greater than Jonah simply because of this last point France makes – Jesus conquers death.

2. Who is the Queen of the South? (See 1 Kings 10:1-13) What is she commended for?

Osborne (ZECNT): *“This is “the queen of Sheba,” who in 1 Kgs 10:1–13 came “to test Solomon with hard questions” (1 Kgs 10:1), much like the Jewish leaders have been doing. The difference is that she sought truth and was willing to accept Solomon’s “wisdom.” So at the final judgment she too will “rise up” to bear witness against the generation of Jesus’ day, which was not open to Jesus’ greater wisdom.”*

3. What is the warning for Jesus’ listeners/challengers in v41 and 42?

The Ninevites and the Queen of the South both responded positively to the preaching and the wisdom of God’s people (Jonah and Solomon respectively).

Those standing there before Jesus have seen and heard much greater things and will see even greater. They should respond in repentance and faith.

4. What ‘house’ is Jesus referring to in verses 43-45?

It would seem he is talking about:

The demon possessed man he has healed, as an example, and

The nation of Israel as it rejects Him and

Individuals who need to not only reject Satan but to positively serve Jesus and his Kingdom

France TNTC): *“This little parable takes up a number of points from the preceding verses: the exorcism scene echoes vv. 22–29, the application in v. 45 takes up ‘this generation’ from vv. 39, 41–42, and the point of the parable could be summed up in the words of v. 30 – there is no room for neutrality. It is shown by the end of v. 45 to be a parable, not an objective psychiatric observation. It warns of the danger of half-hearted repentance: this evil generation might be ‘cleansed’ by Jesus’ ministry among them, but a repentance which does not lead to a new allegiance leaves a void which the devil will exploit; he who is not positively with Jesus must inevitably end up against him.*

Impact

1. What is your personal reaction to Jesus’ miracles? Why are the miracles recorded in the Gospels? What is the greatest miracle? (Hint: Jesus refers obliquely to it in this passage)

For discussion.

The defining miracle for Jesus is His resurrection from the dead.

2. What warning for us is in the parable of verses 43-45?

Again for discussion.

Wilkins (NIVAC): *“The passage is parabolic in nature, drawing on real-life situations to tell a story to make a point. It has relevance for the generation as a whole, but it is instructive for individuals as well. That is, the parable points to an unbeliever who has been exorcised but who does not come to Jesus and enter the kingdom (cf. 12:28). The exorcised person must respond to Jesus’ invitation to believe in him as Messiah, enter the kingdom of God, and experience new life through his Spirit. The implication here is that this person has not entered the kingdom. Without kingdom transformation, a “cleaned-up” person is more vulnerable to the renewed and persistent attack of the demon world to take back ownership. He can easily be repossessed by the demon and seven more wicked cronies and will be in far worse shape, completely dominated by the entourage of wickedness. But if this person does receive Jesus and the kingdom, Satan will flee from the presence of God in this disciple’s life (James 4:7; 1 John 4:4).”*

Blomberg (TNAC): *“Ownership by the devil must be replaced with ownership by Christ (cf Romans 6:15-18). Otherwise one’s release is only temporary.”*

If Matthew is the ‘teacher of the law’ who brings out ‘new treasures as well as old’ (Matthew 13:52), what here is new and what references to the ‘old’ can you see?

Here Matthew challenges his readers, as Jesus challenges his hearers, to re-look at the familiar OT passages and to see them as shedding light on what He is doing.

Jesus is the new Jonah preaching to those under judgment.

Jesus is the new Solomon sharing godly wisdom with the world around.

Jesus is himself the Sign.

Study 10: Matthew 12:46-50

Harvest Relationships

Before You Start

What are the priorities you set (consciously or unconsciously) in the relationships you have in your life?

Listen Carefully to Matthew 12:46-50

The Text

1. Who is wanting to speak to Jesus? Where are they?

Jesus' mother and brothers are there and they want to speak with him.

They are on the outside – either of the circle of people around Jesus or of the house he was teaching from.

Interesting to consider what it means that they are on the outside of the crowd. (Of course, it might just mean that they turned up later.)

Worth noting Osborne (ZECNT): *“Mark 3:20–21 tells us that his family thought he had lost his mind and came to take him home, but Matthew omits that. He does not want to link Jesus' family with his opponents but with his true followers. The fact that the text here says Jesus has “brothers” (see the list of names in 13:55) causes conflict with Roman Catholic dogma concerning Mary's perpetual virginity, so Catholic scholars have often suggested that they were either Jesus' cousins (Jerome, Augustine) or children of Joseph by a previous marriage (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius). Yet while ἀδελφοί can refer to relatives, its more natural sense in a context like this is blood brothers. Since Joseph is not mentioned here or anywhere else as present during Jesus' miracles, the most natural conclusion is that he had died some time earlier.”*

Matthew 13:55-56 *“Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother called Mary, and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, aren't they all with us? So where does he get all these things?”*

2. How does Jesus find out about them?

One presumes the message filters through the crowds that they are there and someone in close mentions this to Jesus.

3. What is Jesus' initial point of reply?

He addresses the crowd more generally.

He takes this opportunity as a teaching moment to point out something about relationships.

4. Who does Jesus point to as his 'mother' and 'brothers'?

And for that matter 'sister' v50

Jesus points to his followers, his disciples, as his 'mother and brothers'.

Kingdom relationships are 'family' relationships.

Wilkins (NIVAC): *"Jesus intentionally broadens the gender references to include women as his disciples by not only referring to mother and brother but also by bringing in "sister." His message and ministry initiate a unique form of discipleship. Within Judaism at that time, especially among the rabbis, only men could become a disciple of a rabbi and study the Torah. But with Jesus, any person—woman or man, young or old, Gentile or Jew—who responds to the gospel of the kingdom and believes on him for eternal life is his disciple. In other words, discipleship to Jesus is not defined by rabbinic models but by relationship to Jesus, which means obedience to the will of the Father. The Old Testament prepared for this concept by stressing the importance of both the nation and the individual walking in the ways of God, which is now fulfilled in a discipleship to Jesus that creates a new family of God."*

Connections

1. What is the qualification to be Jesus' "brother and sister and mother"?

Jesus defines this as 'whoever does the will of my Father in heaven.'

Interesting that this follows the parable about demons and the house. Doing the will of the Father is what spiritually fills the house and prevents the demon invasion.

2. Is Jesus being 'rude' to his mother and his brothers?

One suspects not. At worst they are being used as a teaching aid.

Osborne (ZECNT): *"The rhetorical double question powerfully sets the scene for the proclamation of v. 50. Jesus gives his mother and his brothers separate emphasis to drive the point home more powerfully. This is made all the more poignant in the fact that they are standing right outside the house. Riddles were an important teaching tool in the ancient world, and Jesus gives this a riddle-like air."*

3. Where are the priorities in your relationships?

For discussion.

Note Osborne ZECNT): *"The Church as Family*

There is a succession of metaphors in ecclesiology, each more intense than the other. We are first an assembly (ἐκκλησία), then a community, and

finally a family. Each level involves deeper intimacy, more sharing, and greater caring — indeed, more time spent together. This should be a major strategy of every local church or Christian group. See the metaphor of the church as the household of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15) and Paul’s frequent use of “brothers and sisters” to refer to fellow believers (e.g., Rom 1:13; 7:1; 1 Cor 1:10, 2:1). In 1 Tim 5:1–2 and 1 John 2:12–14 family imagery is used to challenge the various groups in the church.”

Blomberg (TNAC): *“More positively he (Jesus) points to believers as people who should care for each other as if they were family members. Jesus does call any of his disciples ‘father’, however, not just because Joseph is not present (many think he is by now dead), but, as in 23:9, because Christians have only one “Father ... in heaven.” Paul will later contemplate the extraordinary evangelistic potential of displaying to the world a family like unity in the church (Ephesians 3:5-10). The all too common contemporary divisiveness and lack of warm interpersonal relationship in the Christian community seem scandalous in comparison.”*

4. What have you learned about the person and work of Jesus in these chapters (10-12)?

Note these references to ‘greater’

Matthew 11:11 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Matthew 12:6 I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

Impact

1. What has Matthew 10-12 taught you about being a follower of Jesus?

For discussion:

Note Osborne (ZECNT):

“Discipleship and a Lifestyle of Obedience

As stated above, this is at the heart of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount. The deepening of Torah in the antitheses of 5:21–48 centers on thinking and doing, and it is clear that a

MATTHEW 10-12: HARVEST TIME

disciple is identified as one who lives out what Jesus teaches. The disciples inside the home are sitting at Jesus' feet, both learning and submitting to his will (cf. Mary in Luke 10:38–42). So discipleship is learning the precepts of Jesus and then obediently practicing them in daily life. The shallow quasi-Christian who attends but never obeys is not a disciple and must realize he or she is in danger of Matt 7:23, "I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of evil.""

2. "Labourers for the Harvest" What have you been challenged to do as a follower of Jesus by these chapters?

For discussion.

If Matthew is the 'teacher of the law' who brings out 'new treasures as well as old' (Matthew 13:52), what here is new and what references to the 'old' can you see?

Israel right through the OT sees themselves as God's family.

Jesus now applies this to himself and gives the parameters of being in that relationship.

As in the Jesus new teaching so it was in the old it is a right relationship of trust and obedience that true membership of the family is demonstrated.