

Matthew 12C

- The die has been cast...we've reached the point of no return for Israel and for Jesus
 - Jesus made His best case to Israel as their Messiah Who has come offering them a Kingdom
 - Nevertheless, most of the people remain unconvinced and now Israel's leaders have turned openly hostile toward Jesus
 - Obviously, this impasse can't continue forever
 - Jesus can't offer Himself to Israel indefinitely hoping they will eventually come around to the truth
 - Sooner or later a decision must be made, and that time has now come in Chapter 12
 - Matthew is ready to show us the final straw, the moment that Israel lost the Kingdom in that day
 - And to bring us to that point, Matthew first explains why the offer of the Kingdom couldn't last forever

Matt. 12:15 But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all,

Matt. 12:16 and warned them not to tell who He was.

Matt. 12:17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

Matt. 12:18 "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN;
MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASED;
I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,
AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.

Matt. 12:19 "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT;
NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

Matt. 12:20 "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.

Matt. 12:21 "AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

- Being fully aware of the Pharisees' conspiracy, Matthew says Jesus withdrew for a time to avoid further conflict
 - Jesus left the synagogue where He had just healed the man and then probably retreated into the hills around the Sea of Galilee
 - Matthew says the crowds followed Him as usual, and Jesus continued performing healing for all of them as usual
 - Jesus knew the time to withdraw the Kingdom offer had arrived
 - But that was all the more reason to heal as many as He could in the meantime
 - Because the time for mass healings was also coming to an end
 - But now notice a new detail that appears for the first time in Matthew's account
 - Jesus instructs the crowds not to share His identity with others
 - That statement in v.16 is our clue that a change was taking place
 - Jesus was beginning His transition from a Kingdom proposal to a Kingdom program
 - In the period of the Kingdom proposal, the whole point of Jesus' ministry was to announce Himself to Israel and propose a union of sorts
 - Jesus offered Himself as King bringing the Kingdom, and then He waited to see if Israel would accept that proposal
 - But once they reject that proposal, the plan of God moves forward without Israel, at least for a time
 - At that point, the entire thrust of Jesus' earthly ministry changes to preparing His disciples to assume leadership over the Kingdom program
- Matthew then reminds us this transition was in keeping with prophecy that foretold the Messiah's rejection and the need for Him to take His message elsewhere
 - Isaiah 42 says the Messiah would come to Israel as a Servant, One chosen by the Father
 - The Messiah wouldn't be a man of ego or self-promotion...He lived a humble life

- And even when the time came to present Himself to Israel as their Messiah, He let the Spirit of God make that testimony
- The Spirit of God was upon Him, Isaiah says, so that by the anointing of the Spirit, Jesus performed many miracles
- In that way, Jesus was both humble and yet also glorified by the Father

John 5:36 “But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish – the very works that I do – testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

John 5:37 “And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.

- But Isaiah goes on to say Israel would reject their Messiah despite the Spirit’s testimony
 - Isaiah says in v.19 that Israel wouldn’t see their Messiah standing on street corners begging or arguing people to believe in Him
 - Jesus wouldn’t quarrel with Israel or try convincing them into accepting Him...Jesus simply went to a new audience
 - Which is why the truth then goes to the Gentiles instead
 - Nonetheless, Israel wasn’t going to be forsaken for their rejection...the Messiah will win them over eventually
 - Isaiah uses two euphemisms to explain the Messiah’s grace and mercy for Israel
 - In v.20 Isaiah says the Messiah wouldn’t break off a battered reed or put out a smoldering wick
 - Both phrases refer to making something out of nothing
 - A battered reed is useless just as is a smoldering wick...we would give up on both and look elsewhere for a replacement
 - And that’s what we might have supposed God would do with Israel after they rejected Jesus
 - But Isaiah says that Messiah will not break off a battered reed nor put out a smoldering wick...He will make something out of nothing

- Jesus leads justice to victory, Isaiah says, meaning Jesus will eventually bring the just outcome to God's people
- In time Jesus will bring Israel into the light, which is just given God's promises to His people in keeping with God's word
- So before Matthew shows us the moment Israel lost the Kingdom in this day, he reminds us that the Bible said this would happen
 - Yet despite Israel's rejection of Jesus in that day, this would not be last word for God's people
 - They might look like a broken reed, a smoldering wick about to die, but the Lord would kindle the flame in a day to come
 - So don't worry when you see this rejection happen...the story isn't over yet
 - But meanwhile, the Kingdom offer has to go somewhere, and Isaiah says in v.21 that it will go to the Gentiles instead
 - That's Matthew's prologue to the rejection moment, so that we understand what is happening and also what's not happening
 - The Israel of that generation is losing the Kingdom here, yes
 - The Israel of the future will still obtain it, however
- So now Matthew is now ready to show us the moment of paradise lost
 - And it begins with another healing...

[Matt. 12:22](#) Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

[Matt. 12:23](#) All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

[Matt. 12:24](#) But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

- At some point after the Sabbath, Jesus is presented with a demon-possessed man as many times before
 - We've studied a little about demon possession in past lessons, so let me just remind you of some of the important details

- We learned that demons are angels that fell into sin by following after Satan's rebellion
- They chose to become part of Satan's army, and today they serve Satan in a spiritual war against God
- When demons target human beings for attacks, one of their tactics is inhabiting or indwelling the bodies of unbelievers
 - Just as the Spirit of God can indwell a believer, so too can demonic spirits indwell the bodies of unbelievers
 - And just as when the presence of the Spirit of God in a believer produces new and lasting positive behaviors (fruit)
 - So too when a demon takes up residence in the body of a person, it will bring lasting negative effects on that person
- Over time, the demon's presence in the person degrades a person's mental and physical state leading to increasingly bizarre behaviors
 - The demon speaks to the person constantly, day and night, tormenting them with voices of condemnation and perversion
 - The person experiences growing feelings of fear, dread, anxiety and paranoia
- Eventually, the person's thoughts and emotions may be so disrupted by the demon's influence that he loses touch with reality and becomes incommunicative
 - Notice in this case the man who is possessed by the demon has been made blind and mute by the demon's presence
 - So apparently this man was experiencing the later stages of demon possession
 - And once a demon is finished with a person and ready to move on, the demon will try to make the person take his or her own life
 - As we learned in an earlier lesson, a demon can only leave a human body when the body dies
 - But there is a second way a demon may leave a body...if they are cast out (i.e., forced out) by the power of God

- In Jesus' day, casting out demons from human bodies was not unknown
- The Lord equipped some men from time to time by His Spirit to cast out demons as healing ministry
- We can find evidence of this practice here and elsewhere in the Scripture
 - Notice in v.27 Jesus challenges the Pharisees concerning their "sons" who cast out demons
 - Jesus is referring to some in Israel who were casting out demons from time to time
 - Furthermore, Acts 19 describes Jewish exorcists traveling from place to place removing demons
- So we know the Lord granted certain people power to remove demons but that ability came with certain restrictions
 - Think back a few months ago to our study of Matthew 8 when we studied the miracle of Jesus healing a leper
 - At that time I told you that there had never been before in Israel's history an example of a Jew healed of leprosy
 - Yet I also told you that we have an entire chapter in the Law devoted to how to deal with a person healed of leprosy
 - The rabbis noticed this contradiction, and wondered what it meant
 - The rabbis concluded the Lord must have reserved the power to heal leprosy for a special occasion
 - Specifically, they concluded that only the Messiah would possess the power to heal a leper
 - So when someone did heal a leper, that meant that man was the Messiah
 - This gave rise to the notion of a "Messianic miracle" or a miracle that only the Messiah would be permitted to accomplish
 - Healing a leper was a Messianic miracle, and another was casting out a mute demon

- Once again, casting out demons was not a unique miracle, since men did this from time to time in Israel
- But casting out a *mute* demon was unprecedented in Israel...like healing a leper, it had never been done before
 - And the reason it had never been done before is because of the unique way exorcists operated in conducting their healing
 - A Jewish exorcist could only cast out a demon by calling on the name of the demon
 - The exorcist would speak directly to the person asking the person to divulge the name of the demon inside
 - Perhaps the demon had shared its name with the person or perhaps the exorcist could coax the demon into divulging it
 - According to rabbinical teaching in that day, this was the only way the Lord granted healing for a demon-possessed people
 - We can see Jesus using this rabbinical method elsewhere in the Gospels
 - For example, in the incident of the demons who possessed a man living in the tombs, notice Jesus' method

Luke 8:28 Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me."

Luke 8:29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Luke 8:30 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.

- Jesus asks for the demon's name during His exchange with the man
- There was a group of demons in the man, so they respond to Jesus calling themselves "legion"
- Which brings us back to our moment here in Matthew 12

- If the exorcist couldn't learn the demon's name because the man was made mute by the demon, then the exorcist was stuck
 - There was no way to get the demon's name, and therefore there was no way to cast him out
 - That's why a mute demon could not be cast out under ordinary circumstances
- And for that reason, the rabbis concluded that casting out a mute demon was a miracle reserved for the Messiah alone
 - We can see evidence of that problem in another scene in the Gospels

[Mark 9:17](#) And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute;

[Mark 9:18](#) and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it."

[Mark 9:19](#) And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!"

[Mark 9:28](#) When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?"

[Mark 9:29](#) And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

- Notice again Jesus was dealing with a mute demon, and His disciples tried to cast out the demon
 - But because they couldn't learn the demon's name, they couldn't use the normal rabbinical method and so they failed
 - When they asked Jesus why they failed, Jesus says because "this kind" of demon only comes out by prayer and fasting
 - "This kind" refers to a mute demon, which only God can cast out
 - Therefore, it requires prayer (i.e., appeal to God)
- Also notice that Jesus rebukes the disciples and the crowd for being an unbelieving generation

- Why was Jesus so upset at them? Because they should have realized they were facing one of the Messianic miracles
- And had they believed Jesus was Messiah, they would have asked Jesus to cast out that demon in the first place
- Which brings us back to Matthew 12 and what happened next
 - Notice in v.23 the crowd sees Jesus perform this special miracle and responds by asking, “This can’t be the son of David can he?”
 - They were acknowledging that they had just seen a Messianic Miracle, and they ask if this man could really be the Messiah
 - The term “Son of David” is a special title that Jews used only in reference to the Messiah
 - The term comes from the OT prophecies that say the Messiah will be a descendent of David, a “son” of David
 - But also notice at the end of v.23 their response takes the form of a negative question
 - This *can’t* be the Son of David, can he?
 - Jesus simply didn’t look the part, because He didn’t fit their preconceived ideas of the Messiah
 - He was a plain man from a nothing town...hardly Messiah material
 - And the people of Israel couldn’t wrap their heads around an ugly, plain Messiah, so they ask, this can’t be the son of David?
- They directed their question to their religious leaders, who were the experts in all things Messiah (the people assumed)
 - But now those leaders have a problem, because they too saw the miracle and of course they also recognized its meaning
 - But obviously, the Pharisees do not want to confirm that Jesus is the Messiah
 - Jesus had rejected Pharisaic Judaism and the authority of the Mishnah, the Oral Law
 - So if the Pharisees acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, they would lose their place of authority over the people

- On the other hand, they couldn't simply deny the miracle, since everyone saw it and everyone knew what it meant
 - So their solution in v.24 is to claim that Jesus did perform the miracle but He did so by the power of Beelzebul
 - My translation reads "Beelzebul" but the Greek word used here is "Beelzebub," meaning lord of the flies
 - The Jews adopted that title for Satan as a way of mocking him
- So the Pharisees said Jesus was working with the power of Satan, which explained why He did something that ordinary people couldn't do
 - The leaders' response and the crowds' willingness to accept the explanation was the precise moment they lost the kingdom
 - This leads to the crucial point where Jesus withdraws His Kingdom proposal from that generation of Israel
- We see that moment more clearly in the rest of the chapter, which we examine some today and the rest next time

[Matt. 12:25](#) And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

[Matt. 12:26](#) "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?

[Matt. 12:27](#) "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges.

- Matthew says Jesus knew their thoughts, but what thoughts is Matthew referring to?
 - The Pharisees' spoke their response to the people, so their explanation wasn't the "thoughts" Jesus knew
 - Everyone knew what they said
 - Matthew is referring to the unspoken thoughts of the crowd as they consider what the Pharisees said
 - Jesus knew the crowd was agreeing with what they heard and, knowing their thoughts, Jesus shows how they were acting foolishly

- He rebukes the people by exposing the nonsensical nature of the Pharisees' explanation
 - In vs.25-26 Jesus responds saying a kingdom or city or house that is divided against itself will not stand
 - Jesus' metaphor is set in the context of a battle or war, where a kingdom or city or house is battling against a common enemy
 - Winning a war against a determined enemy is hard enough even when everyone is working together
 - But if you start fighting among yourselves, then you have no hope to prevail against the enemy
- In the metaphor, Jesus is speaking about the spiritual war that Satan wages against God
 - Satan and his demons are waging war, so he can't afford to waste time fighting against themselves
 - So if Jesus were casting out demons with the power of Satan, then it would mean Satan's house was divided against itself
 - Therefore, the Pharisees' argument just doesn't make sense
- Then Jesus makes a second point...in v.27 He asks, if I cast out demons by the power of Satan, what power do your sons use?
 - Jesus is showing the inconsistency of their logic
 - They claim Jesus is using Satan's power to cast out demons
 - But since the Pharisees' sons were exorcists, why not assume they too were working with Satan's power?
 - Why make one assumption for one group but a different assumption for Jesus?
- Finally, Jesus makes His main point

[Matt. 12:28](#) "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

[Matt. 12:29](#) "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

[Matt. 12:30](#) "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

- In v.28 Jesus notes that there is one explanation that these men have refused to consider...the only explanation that actually makes sense
 - Jesus says He casts out demons with the Spirit of God
 - Jesus is referring to the anointing power He received when the Spirit came upon Him at His baptism
- At His baptism, Jesus received the Spirit Who then empowered Jesus for the miraculous works of His ministry
 - Because of His humanity, Jesus was dependent upon the Holy Spirit to accomplish the miracles that testified to Jesus' claims
 - That's why Jesus says He cast out the demon by the Spirit of God
- That Messianic miracle was a testimony of the Spirit of God to the people that the kingdom of God had arrived
 - That's the only reasonable conclusion you can make
 - Yet in their thoughts, the crowd accepted the illogical explanation their leaders told them
- Jesus finishes with a parable to indict their willful ignorance of the truth
 - Jesus asks how could someone enter into a strongman's house to carry off the man's possessions without first binding the strongman
 - The answer is obvious: you can't because the strongman will prevent you from taking his possessions
 - So if someone is able to take what belongs to a strongman, then it must mean the strongman has been bound
- In that parable, the strongman is Satan and Satan's house is this world
 - Jesus is the One Who comes into Satan's home, into the world, to plunder Satan's possessions by freeing people from His curse
 - Jesus brings healing, hope, joy and the promise of eternal life to a lost and dying world...freeing us from the dominion of Satan
 - And in this one example, the demon possessed this man, but Jesus took that possession away from Satan's forces

- Therefore, we must conclude that Jesus wasn't working with Satan... Jesus had the power to bind Satan, to arrest him
 - And if has the power to bind Satan, then Jesus must be a greater power...He must have the power to replace Satan's dominion
 - Which means Jesus was bringing the Kingdom of God
- The unavoidable conclusion in that moment was that Jesus performed a Messianic miracle, and therefore Jesus was the Messiah
 - And if Jesus was the Messiah, then the Kingdom had come to Israel
 - And the only reasonable response to the Kingdom is to embrace the king and enter into His reign
 - But instead, the people chose to accept a ridiculous explanation offered by Jesus' enemies
 - They chose to believe that the miracle done by the power of the Spirit of God was actually a work done by the power of Satan
 - As they did, they lost the Kingdom
- Notice in v.30 Jesus says you're either with me or you're against me...you are either on God's side or you're fighting against God
 - There is no third choice
 - And Israel made its choice
 - Next lesson we'll study the consequences of that choice, beginning in v.31
 - But please consider the ramifications of Jesus' statement here...you are for Him or else you are against Him
 - There is before faith and after faith
 - Before faith we are enemies of God because we oppose the One God sent for us – Jesus Christ
 - Someone may be a good person in many respects...perhaps even a devout religious person, even a loving person
 - But until they truly receive by faith the One the Father sent in His name, Jesus says they are an enemy of God

- That means there truly is no such thing as a seeker, though there are people seeking to know more about God
 - The person who is on the fence when it comes to Jesus may seem themselves as a neutral party, but God sees them as an enemy
 - We are enemies until we are reconciled with God by faith, Paul says

Rom. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- Until we accept Jesus as our Messiah, we are scattering while God's trying to gather
- That was Israel's choice too...they couldn't have their cake and eat it too
 - They wanted healing, they liked it when Jesus multiplied fish and bread, they enjoyed hearing His teaching
 - They even recognized His power to perform a Messianic Miracle
- But they weren't willing to acknowledge or submit to Jesus' rule and authority as King
 - As Christians, we have come to Jesus' side, and we are no longer His enemy...He calls us friends and a child of God
 - But all the more reason we should obey Him, right?
- The Israel of Jesus' day missed their Messiah because they took their eye off the word of God, and got wrapped up in a manmade religion instead
 - We must do better...remember the words of the writer of Hebrews:

Heb. 10:22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Heb. 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Heb. 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Heb. 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

- We too are waiting for the Messiah...for Jesus' return
 - And while we wait, the writer says we should draw near to Christ even now with a heart fully assured that Jesus has made us clean
 - And knowing we are forever saved, don't waiver in your confidence nor in your obedience
- While we await Christ, don't let false teaching persuade you to deny the obvious truths of the Bible or become distracted with temporal things
 - Don't waiver in your confidence that the Lord is going to return and that the Kingdom will appear one day
 - Time is not an enemy of God...He is faithful, the writer says, because God's word doesn't change with the passing of time
- Instead, let's stimulate one another to love and good deeds in the meantime
 - Don't be satisfied with ritual and rule keeping, as we've discussed here before
 - Live to serve Jesus knowing that's why He's left us here for a time
 - And do it in the company of other believers, making every effort to gather together because that's where real ministry happens
- If we do these things, then we don't overlook Jesus when He comes
 - We don't overlook Him in His word
 - We won't overlook Him in the work He does in us and through us
 - And we won't overlook His commands as He prepares us for His return
 - Because I can assure you we won't miss His return...the question is, will you be ready for it when it happens?