

A note from Kathy

No one faults a person who has a legitimate question. But those who refuse to acknowledge the clear evidence of Jesus' miracles will receive no further proof. Refusing to see the truth or acknowledge the authority of Jesus will result in judgment.

Observation

1. What day of the week is it when the chapter opens?
2. Did the disciples have a need or a want in verse 1?
3. Were the disciples out working their fields, or simply picking a few grains of wheat or barley (some translations say ears of corn)? Why were they picking the grain?
4. The Pharisees were a sect among the Jews whose religion consisted in a strict observance of rites, ceremonies and traditions of the elders, and whose pretended holiness led them to separate themselves. They considered themselves to be more righteous than other Jews. They had established an abundance of rules of their own concerning the Sabbath. They considered the effort of the disciples in picking the grain and rubbing it in their hands to be harvesting, and that was forbidden. Was this God's law or man's?
5. Jesus did not get defensive, even though they were accusing him of not knowing the law and not supervising his disciples well. He simply began to teach using the history and heritage they loved, using two examples to help them see the truth. List the facts you see from these two examples?

King David and his men (1 Samuel 21:1-7)

The Temple Priests (Numbers 28:9-10)

6. Jesus was well aware of the fact that the Pharisees had an agenda. What were their motives for questioning Jesus in Matthew 12:2, 10?

7. How did Jesus respond to their questions (verses 3 & 5)? What was he implying?
8. Did Jesus' miraculous act of kindness to the man with the shriveled hand help the Pharisees see the error of their ways? What does their response in verse 14 reveal about them?
9. Verses 18-21 are a quote from Isaiah 42:1-4. Notice who was speaking; what do you learn about Jesus from these verses?
10. In Matthew 12:22, we see a man brought to Jesus; what was his problem? What were his symptoms?
11. What did Jesus do for this man?
12. The people that were around him that day were astonished and voiced their question, "Could this be the Son of David?" What were they really asking? Who had the nation of Israel been looking for?
13. The Pharisees heard what the people were saying; what was their response? How did they explain Jesus' ability to rid this man of his demon and restore him to health?
14. Jesus reasoned with those present that day. What truth did he point out (verses 25-28)?
15. Can't you almost picture verse 29? What was Jesus trying to help them see?
16. Verses 31-32 speak of sins that will be forgiven when repented of, but what one sin did the scripture say would not be forgiven?
17. Jesus gave a very good plan for discerning those who are good and those who are bad (verse 33). It may take some time, but what would be the proof?
18. What did Jesus call the religious leaders that day?
19. According to verses 34-37, what does a person's speech reveal?

20. What did the Pharisees ask Jesus for in verse 38? Did he give them what they asked him for? Why?
21. In verses 40-42, what did Jonah, the men of Ninevah, and the Queen of the South (Queen of Sheba) have in common? Would you say they each recognized the truth about God when it was presented to them?
22. What did Jesus say concerning the generation he was dealing with? Look back at verses 39-42; what was he trying to get them to see with these examples?
23. In verses 43-45, Jesus described a man who had been controlled by a demon, but when released, had done nothing with this new freedom. What was the end result of his postponing inviting Jesus into his heart?
24. Who did Jesus say was related to him? Read Matthew 12:46-50.

Application

1. The apostle Paul said of himself in Acts 23:6, and again in Acts 26:5, that he was “a Pharisee of the Pharisees” before he met Christ. It was his desire to keep every religious law. But after his salvation, Paul wrote to the Roman believers that this zeal was not based on knowledge. Read Romans 10:1-4. What do you believe their zeal was really based on after reading how the Pharisees responded to Jesus?

Romans 10:1-4 *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

2. Are there people today who live their lives like the Pharisees of Jesus' day? They come up with rules for godly living, and then try to adhere to them. They are rigid in their doctrine and religion, with little room for God's grace and mercy. How can we avoid this trap of religion over a true relationship with God?

3. The Pharisees were constantly looking for a way to make a case against Jesus, or to trip him up in some way. Have you experienced someone's continued jealousy? Did you find it hard to reason with them? What is the best way to handle a situation like this?
4. Jesus was aware they were plotting against him, so he left, not out of fear, but out of duty. Jesus came to do the Father's will, and he had not yet fully accomplished it. Did he have reason to fear or to worry? Do not answer too quickly.
5. There may come a time when we too have people plotting against us because we are doing God's will. How might your study of Matthew 12 help you in that day?
6. You probably have not experienced jealousy and hatred of others to the same degree that Jesus did, but have your motives and actions ever been misunderstood by the world? Jesus said a tree is known by its fruit. What is your fruit? What does it say about you?
7. The prophet Hosea made it very clear what God desired in Hosea 6:6 *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings*. Try to memorize this verse this week. In order to gain a more clear understanding of this verse, it might be helpful to look up the verse in other translations. Spend some time thinking about its meaning.
8. In Matthew 12:46, Jesus was told that his mother and brothers wanted to talk to him. Jesus replied with the question, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Jesus was not denying his responsibility to his earthly family (even as he hung on the cross he made provision for his mother's care), but he was pointing out that he had new spiritual family relationships. We are not to simply discard our biological family, but we must acknowledge that those who share the name Christ are our brothers and sisters now. What part does your earthly family play in your life? What part does your spiritual family play in your life? What are your responsibilities in each of them?