

# Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

February 02, 2025

## I. Introduction

A. From **Matthew 12:1-45** there are four stories that expose the critical, fault-finding methods used by the scribes and Pharisees to carry out their evil intentions towards Jesus. On the other side of that, Matthew shows us the ways Jesus dealt with them.

1. The **first two** stories dealt with keeping the Sabbath law. Between the second and third stories there is a prophecy from **Isaiah 42** that shows that the Messiah would be meek and humble in heart rather than a powerful, charismatic leader who would free Israel from outside conquerors.
2. The **third** story deals with the blasphemy of saying that something good God is doing is actually being done by the devil. And the **fourth** story is about people wanting Jesus to prove He has been sent from God and is doing God's will by having Him perform a sign of their choosing.
3. Today we will look at the Isaiah prophecy and the third story.

B. Pray

## II. Isaiah prophesied Jesus would be meek and humble in heart

A. **Matthew 12:15-21**, But Jesus, aware of this (*the Pharisees conspiring to destroy Him*), withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, [16] and warned them not to tell who He was (*so as not to alert the Pharisees where He was*). [17] This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet (**42:1-4**): [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. [19] He will not quarrel, nor cry out (*argue and complain about being treated unjustly*); nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets (*no protest marches*). [20] A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory. [21] And in His name (*Jesus*) the Gentiles will hope."

B. This quotation from **Isaiah 42:1-4** differs from all known versions, and appears to be Matthew's own translation from the Hebrew. From the larger context, we can conclude that the primary purpose of the quote is to show that long before Jesus came, God said the Messiah (*Jesus*) would be God's meek and humble chosen servant to the world, not just the Jews.

1. However, based on what we know from other scriptures, we can also see in this quote that Jesus – the Messiah – did not come to defeat Rome and restore Israel to its former glory. He came to defeat the devil, to deliver us – Jew and Gentile alike – from the enslaving power of sin, to save us from our selfish, prideful selves, to sanctify and transform us into His likeness, and to grant us eternal life. And of course, He does all this with humility, patience, compassion, meekness, and undeserved grace.
  2. This does not mean Jesus was weak, for He came with power, but it was the power of the Holy Spirit – a power that is still manifesting itself through meekness and humility. But one day, it will manifest itself by leading justice to victory.
- C. Yet for now, a meek and humble Jesus is what is needed. Why? Because God made us in such a way that our heart cannot be conquered by violence, threat, promises of personal gain, or any other method that subverts or bypasses our will and a thoughtful, intentional, freely made decision to turn our heart over to God – as if it had been conquered. The reality is, the only conquered heart is the freely submitted heart.
1. Paul affirms this in **Romans 2:4**, “Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, [for it is] the kindness of God [that] leads [us] to repentance.”
  2. And in **Revelation 3:20**, Jesus affirms this by saying, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”
- D. Some final thoughts on **vs 15-21**.
1. Without question, Jesus trusted God as His primary source of security (**1Peter 2:21-23**). But He also used common sense, as we see in **vs 15**, which shows Him avoiding the threat against His life by leaving town. May we be as wise in merging trust in God with common sense.
  2. Jesus is gentle and patient in working with people, even when they show only a small glimmer of hope that they will come to their senses and respond accordingly. May we do the same with those around us.
  3. A day is coming when Jesus’ meekness and patience with unbelievers will come to an end. When that time comes, Jesus will lead justice to victory by administering justice with unstoppable force. May we love God and unbelievers enough to warn unbelievers.

### III. The Pharisees expose their evil motives. No middle ground.

- A. **Matthew 12:22-29**, 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 (*not all demon possessed people exhibit forms of mental illness*). [23] All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David (*the Messiah*), can he?” [24] But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man [*can’t be the Messiah because he*] casts out demons **only** by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.” [25] And knowing their thoughts Jesus [*presented four logical arguments to show them why they were wrong*], (**Logical argument 1**) “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. [26] If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? [27] (**Logical argument 2**) If I [*get my power from*] Beelzebul [*to*] cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out (*i.e., who gives them the power to overpower the demons*)? For this reason they will be your judges. [28] (**Logical argument 3**) But if I [*get my power to*] cast out demons [*from*] the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. [29] Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first [*overpowers and*] binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. [30] (**Logical argument 4**) He (*the devil, ungodly religious leaders, unbelievers*) who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”

- B. The Pharisees were some of the best educated people in Israel. They knew the OT scriptures. They understood logic and how to use it. They knew how to ask the right questions in order to get the answers they wanted. In other words, they were not educationally or religiously dumb.
1. Yet here they are saying things about Jesus and His source of power that are illogical, and therefore made no sense. For example, they were saying that by the power of the devil, Jesus was undoing what the devil had done. Yet as Jesus pointed out, when one member of a kingdom undoes what another member does, you have a kingdom that is working against itself and therefore will not last.
  2. So how could well-educated men be so illogical and irrational? The same way as us. Are we not prone to say whatever we think we must say – even though it is illogical and irrational – to avoid something we fear, or to prevent the loss of something we believe we must have, or to obtain what we want or believe we need.
  3. Sadly, not only are we willing to be illogical and irrational to make something go the way we want, we will reject logical and rational efforts to bring us to our senses – just like the Pharisees.
  4. For example, Jesus gave them four reasons why their assertion that He was being powered by the devil was totally wrong, yet they closed

- their ears to reason – even though it was obvious that His logic was supported by the truth.
5. In other words, when we don't want to believe or receive or agree with something, or when doing what is right seems too costly, or when we think we must have this or that to feel safe or have a sense of well-being – then logic and reason are easily set aside in order to justify getting or doing what we want.
- C. However, the failure of logic and reason did not stop with the religious leaders. We know that many of the scribes and Pharisees wanted to get rid of Jesus, and one of their methods was to turn the people against Jesus. In this story, they were trying to make the people think that Jesus was a servant of the devil, rather than God's Messiah.
1. And though logic and reason stood against their effort, the people were as willing to be illogical and irrational in their thinking and evaluation of the truth as were the Pharisees.
  2. We know this to be true for two reasons.
    - a. **First**, we know human nature, including our own propensity to abandon reason and logic when it gets in the way of what we want.
    - b. **Second**, we know this from John's gospel – for **John 7:20** says that after Jesus said they wanted to kill Him, the crowd of people responded with, "You have a demon!"
      - (1) And **John 8:48**, says that some Jews said to Jesus, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"
      - (2) And finally, in **John 10:20**, we read that many Jews were saying, "He has a demon and is insane."
    - c. The point is, logic and reason are only effective with those who want to know the truth and are willing to think sensibly, to use discernment, to thoughtfully observe, to ask worthy questions, and when necessary, to seek outside help.
- D. The reality is, we are up against the willful rejection of logic and reason when evangelizing, counseling, trying to help self-destructive or hurting family members, friends and neighbors, working with our children, calling wayward believers to godliness, and when being convicted by God and called by family and friends to make needed changes in how we behave.
1. Knowing that this is what we are up against, may we learn from the foolishness of the Pharisees so that we do not deceive ourselves and follow in their steps.
  2. And may we ponder the logic and reason of God's word. May we listen thoughtfully to the teaching and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. And may we respond according to the ways of love and godliness when

those around us explain how our selfish or prideful or careless choices and behavior are affecting them.

3. To do so is not only the way of God, it is the way of love.

E. Jesus concludes this section by pointing out that when it comes to God, Jesus, righteousness, and love, you are either for them or against them. And this time, the Pharisees made it clear they were against God, Jesus, righteousness, and the way of love. However, they took their stand against God in a way that went so far as to commit an unpardonable sin. To this Jesus said:

#### IV. The unpardonable sin.

A. **Matthew 12:31-32**, “Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. [32] Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

1. To speak against the Holy Spirit is to see an obvious manifestation of the power of God (*obvious in the sense that no human could do it*) without seeing the presence of God. In the case of Jesus casting out demons, God’s power was manifested through the human agency of Jesus. You could see Jesus, you could see God’s power, but you could not see God, himself.
2. Therefore, to blaspheme God is to revile Him, that is, to speak in a manner that shows undeniable contempt for Him, and that vilifies Him as being so evil as to be unworthy of respect and therefore deserving of condemnation.
3. In saying Jesus cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul – when it was actually by the power of God – the Pharisees blasphemed Jesus, and by extension, they blasphemed God.
4. In other words, they indirectly blasphemed God (*the Spirit*) by claiming that what God was doing through the human agency of Jesus (*Son of Man*) was really the devil’s doing. In this situation, the Pharisees knowingly abandoned logic and reason, and deliberately perverted the truth by ascribing God’s activity to the devil in order to make what God was doing for good seem evil and therefore deserving of contempt and vilification.
5. It is important to note that this deliberate perversion of the truth was not committed by foolish unbelievers, but by the best educated, most religious, most serious minded, most self-disciplined Jews of the day. If anyone should have known better and done better, it would have

been them. Yet they did what even they, if in their right mind, would say is unthinkable. They blasphemed God.

- a. God warned against such evil in **Isaiah 5:20**, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”
  - b. Jesus adds definition to Isaiah’s woe by saying that what the Pharisees did was unforgivable – both in this life and the next. In other words, to deliberately pervert the truth by saying that something God has done for good is actually the work of the devil, is to commit a sin that is eternally unforgivable.
6. It is hard to make sense of an unpardonable sin when God has opened repentance, and hence forgiveness, to everyone, including those many deem as undeserving of forgiveness.
  7. I cannot provide an adequate explanation for this seeming contradiction, but from the context we can draw several conclusions.
    - a. **First**, those who committed this sin were seriously religious people who should have been for Jesus rather than against Him.
    - b. **Second**, those who committed this sin were trying to turn the people against Jesus so that they would stop holding Him in high esteem and stop following Him.
    - c. **Third**, those who committed this sin willingly abandoned logic and reason and truth in order to claim that what God was doing was actually the devil’s doing.
    - d. **Finally**, they not only did not repent of their commitment to do away with Jesus, they persevered until they accomplished their goal.

## V. Conclusion

- A. It is unlikely you will blaspheme God, so there may be no reason to consider how this unpardonable sin thing applies to you. But we can learn that how we talk about God has consequences – for good or ill. In addition:
  1. We can learn the foolishness of abandoning the use of logic and reason.
  2. We can learn the foolishness of being so upset with someone that we resort to saying absurdly derogatory and unsubstantiated things about them in order to turn others against them.
  3. And we can learn that it is exceeding foolish to speak against any show of God’s power manifested through human agency for the good of others.