



LESSON 8

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees

MATTHEW 12:22-37



Jesus condemns those who say His power comes from Satan.



“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28).

Supporting Truths

1. Everyone knew Jesus had supernatural power.
2. Jesus' power was not from Satan.
3. Jesus' power proved the kingdom of God had come.
4. Our words show what we believe about Jesus.
5. Those who knowingly attribute the Holy Spirit's work to Satan will not be forgiven.

Objectives

1. Retell what Jesus did for the demon-possessed man.
2. Give two reasons why Jesus' power was not from Satan.
3. Explain what Jesus' power proves about who He is.
4. Give three illustrations of how our words show what is in our hearts.
5. Define blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees • Matthew 12:22–37



Lesson Summary

Jesus did another powerful miracle, and even His enemies knew it was supernatural. So instead of denying the miracle, the Pharisees said that Jesus did it by Satan's power. But Jesus proved them wrong, explaining that His works were good because they came from the Holy Spirit. In fact, it was the Pharisees who were evil, since their evil words proved their evil hearts. They had committed the unforgivable sin: rejecting Jesus with the full knowledge that He was the Messiah.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The Holy Spirit worked powerful miracles through Jesus to prove that He was the promised Messiah who would bring salvation to Israel and to the whole world. But the only way to receive this salvation is to believe what the Holy Spirit says about Jesus. Those who refuse to believe what the Spirit reveals to them can never be forgiven. But those who respond to the Spirit and come to Jesus will be rescued by Him.

LAST WEEK



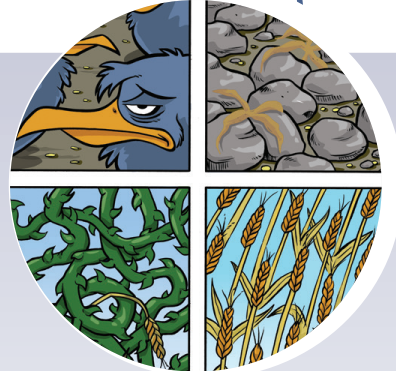
Jesus promises rest
Matthew 11:20–30

THIS WEEK



Jesus rebukes the Pharisees
Matthew 12:22–37

NEXT WEEK



Jesus teaches the parable of the soil
Mark 4:1–20

JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE

Lesson Commentary

Jesus condemns those who say His power comes from Satan.

Miracles are rare. Almost all the miracles in the Bible occurred during three short periods of time, each lasting about 40 years. The rest of biblical history contains very few miracles. So when there was a time of many miracles, there was a special reason. First, God performed miracles through Moses and Joshua when He rescued Israel from Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land. Second, God used the miracles of Elijah and Elisha to confront Israel's idolatry. Third, Jesus and His apostles performed miracles at the central moment of God's salvation plan. In all three periods, the miracles were designed to prove that God is the only God and Savior. So when most of the Jews still rejected Jesus, Jesus rightly condemned them.

Jesus was accused by the Pharisees (12:22–24)

In this instance, Jesus miraculously cured a man who was suffering in many ways (Matt 12:22). This sounds like a complicated case, but to Jesus, it was simple. Without any fancy ritual or magical words, Jesus simply healed him all at once. The man was immediately freed of his demon, his eyes were opened, and his tongue loosened. This shows us what a real miracle is. A **miracle** is something amazing that only God can do, an act of power that breaks the laws of nature, a supernatural work that science can never explain.

Like the miracles of Moses and Elijah, this miracle was undeniable. It made the people wonder if Jesus was the **Son of David, the Messiah promised long ago**. But clear evidence did not lead to faith. Even though the people were astonished, doubts about Jesus still remained (12:23). Literally, the people wondered, "This man is not the Son of David, is He?" In other words, they expected that the answer was probably "no."

The Pharisees wanted to make sure that no one would believe in Jesus. But since they could not deny the miracle, they claimed that Jesus got His supernatural

power only from **Beelzebul, a name used for Satan, the prince of demons** (12:24). Their answer was based on what they wanted to believe, not on the evidence. After all, this wasn't the first time the Pharisees had said that Jesus' power came from Satan (9:34), and they had already decided to kill Him (12:14). So their argument did not discredit Jesus. Instead, it revealed their own stubborn unbelief.

THINK ABOUT IT

Unbelief rejects logic or evidence; it comes from rebellious minds (Rom 1:19–21).



Jesus refuted the Pharisees (12:25–29)

To refute the Pharisees' argument, Jesus first showed how **illogical** their argument was. Jesus used a proverb to show that it does not make sense that Satan would fight against himself (12:25–26). Second, Jesus showed how **inconsistent** their argument was. They were saying two things that could not both be true. With Jesus, they acted like the only way to cast out demons was by Satan's power. But with their own people, they acted like casting out demons was not by Satan's power (12:27). Their own exorcisms were actually ineffective (Acts 19:13–16), but by acting like they were successful, they were contradicting themselves.

After refuting them, Jesus gave His own explanation. First, His argument was **consistent** (12:28), because casting out demons by the Spirit of God agrees with what He was saying all along. From the beginning He preached that the kingdom of God was close to them (4:17). The full reality of God's kingdom is still future, but in one sense it had come upon the Jews, since the chosen King was standing right there in front of them. By claiming to cast out demons by the Spirit, Jesus was claiming to be the chosen Servant that Isaiah foretold over 700 years before (12:18; Isa 42:1).

Second, Jesus used a rhetorical question to show that His argument is **logical** (12:29). If Jesus really is the promised King, it makes sense that He will first defeat Satan before taking the rule of the world away from him (Col 2:15). This fits with how miracles were used in the past. To rescue Israel from Egypt,

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees • Matthew 12:22–37



God used powerful miracles to defeat the power of Egypt. To call Israel to embrace Him alone as King, God used powerful miracles to show that the gods of the Canaanites were nothing. So it makes sense that the One sent to save His people would have miraculous power over Satan. The only logical conclusion is that Jesus was right and the Pharisees were wrong.

Jesus accused the Pharisees (12:30–37)

As Elijah did long ago (1 Kgs 18:21), Jesus warned the crowd that they could not stay neutral in this debate, and neither can you (Matt 12:30). If you risk everything and stand with Jesus, then at the final judgment He will gather you up like a farmer storing his wheat safely in his barn (3:12a). But if you are unwilling to commit to Jesus, He will throw you away into unending fire (3:12b).



THINK ABOUT IT

“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kgs 18:21).

This warning is urgent because of how dangerous the Pharisees’ claim really was. By claiming that Jesus’ power came from Satan, the Pharisees had committed the **unforgivable sin** (12:31). It is hard to imagine such a tragic sin because God is

gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love and forgiveness (Exod 34:6–7; Ps 86:5; 103:3; 1 John 1:9). David could be forgiven for adultery and murder (2 Sam 12:13); Israel could be forgiven for stubborn idolatry (Dan 9:9); Paul could be forgiven for persecuting Christians to death (1 Tim 1:13); and Jesus even forgave the people who nailed Him to the cross (Luke 23:34)! What sin could be worse than that?

The Pharisees committed two blasphemies. First, **blasphemy against the Son** is rejecting the salvation Jesus provides, but that can be forgiven when a person admits he is wrong (Matt 12:32). That’s why Paul and Jesus’ executioners could be forgiven: they did not realize just who Jesus was (1 Tim 1:13; Luke 23:34). As soon as Paul knew Jesus, He repented quickly (Acts 9:5, 18). Even

Peter’s denial of Christ was forgiven (Mark 14:71; John 21:15–19). Although he caved under pressure, he still trusted Jesus as his Messiah, as his repentance shows (Mark 14:72).

But the Pharisees also committed **blasphemy against the Spirit** by rejecting the gospel while being fully aware of what they were doing. It is the Holy Spirit who gives specific knowledge about Christ, but they had made up their minds not to pay attention to the Spirit. Jesus knew that, because He knew their thoughts (Matt 12:25). The Pharisees had experienced the Spirit’s power, the goodness of God’s word, and the power of the coming kingdom (Heb 6:4–6). They knew the truth of salvation, but they deliberately went on sinning (10:26). They knew Jesus was the Messiah, but they would rather kill Him than worship Him (10:29). They could not now be forgiven, because they knowingly rejected the only way of being forgiven.

To prove His accusation true, Jesus turned the Pharisees’ argument against them. The Pharisees had questioned the source of Jesus’ power, even though His deeds were good. But Jesus said they should judge His source by His fruit (Matt 12:33). His fruit was good, so His source was good. Their fruit, however, was rotten, because they were rotten. They could not hide their wickedness in their hearts; it spewed out of their mouths (12:34–35; 15:18–19; Jer 17:9; Prov 4:23). The Pharisees tried to accuse Jesus, but Jesus, using the Pharisees’ own argument, accused them.

Finally, Jesus stopped speaking to the whole crowd and instead spoke to each person individually. It’s as if He looks straight at you with a final warning: Your words show so clearly what is in your heart that you will be judged according to every thoughtless word you speak (12:36–37). What do your unguarded words show about your heart? Do they reveal a heart that truly follows Jesus, or one that defiantly opposes Him? That will make all the difference on judgment day.

THINK ABOUT IT

What kind of heart do your words reveal?



Lesson Outline

Jesus condemns those who say His power comes from Satan.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Jesus' miracle proved He is God (12:22–29).
2. The Pharisees' words proved they were evil (12:30–37).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Jesus was accused by the Pharisees (12:22–24).
 - Jesus showed His supernatural power (12:22–23).
 - The Pharisees said His power was from Satan (12:24)
2. Jesus refuted the Pharisees (12:25–29).
 - Their accusation was illogical and inconsistent (12:25–27).
 - Jesus' explanation was consistent and logical (12:28–29).
3. Jesus accused the Pharisees (12:30–37).
 - Those who are not with Jesus are against Him (no neutrality) (12:30).
 - Those who blaspheme the Spirit will not be forgiven (12:31–32).
 - Those who speak against Jesus prove they are evil (12:33–37).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees • Matthew 12:22–37



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What was wrong with the man who came to Jesus?**
He was blind (could not see), mute (could not speak), and had a demon in him.
- 2. Whose power did the Pharisees say Jesus was using?**
Beelzebul's (Satan's).
- 3. Whose power did Jesus say He was using?**
The Holy Spirit's.
- 4. How do we know that the Pharisees had evil hearts?**
Because they spoke evil words about Jesus.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did the people wonder when Jesus healed the man?**
They wondered, "He isn't the Son of David, is he?" They wondered, but they did not believe.
- 2. Why was the Pharisees' response illogical (did not make sense)?**
It is illogical for Satan to fight against his own demons.
- 3. Why was the Pharisees' response inconsistent (saying two things that could not both be true)?**
They said the only way Jesus could cast out demons was by Satan's power. But then they said their own people could do it without Satan's power.
- 4. Why was Jesus' explanation consistent (saying two things that agree with one another)?**
Powerful miracles are just what we would expect if God's kingdom was present with them.
- 5. Why was Jesus' explanation logical (makes sense)?**
Jesus was coming to rescue people from Satan, so it makes sense that He would have power over Satan.
- 6. What is the unforgivable sin?**
Knowing by the Holy Spirit who Jesus is, but calling the Holy Spirit Satan instead of believing.
- 7. Who really had an evil source, Jesus or the Pharisees?**
Jesus' good works and words proved His good source. The Pharisees evil words proved their evil source.
- 8. Why are your words so important?**
We will be judged by our words, because they show what we really believe about Jesus.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



TAKE DOWN TAG

Have groups of children work on a project as a team, such as building a wall with blocks. Whenever the teacher touches a child, they must stop building and begin destroying the wall. Afterwards, talk about what happened, then read Matthew 12:25. How do teams work together to get things done? What happened when someone started working against them? In today's lesson, we will learn about a group of people who accused Jesus of working on Satan's team.

NO MIDDLE GROUND

Ask the children a series of questions they must answer with their feet. For example, if they like dogs more than cats, they must walk to the right side of the room. If they like cats more than dogs, they must walk to the left side of the room. If they like them equally, they should stay in the middle. After a few questions, change the rules and tell them there is no longer any middle ground. Explain that they will have to make a choice between one side of the room or the other. Today we will learn that we are either for or against Jesus: there is no middle ground.



BLIND AND MUTE

In today's lesson, Jesus heals a man who is blind and mute (Matt 12:22). Illustrate this by telling the children to put their hands over their eyes and mouth. When everyone is ready, ask the class a question. If some of the children try to speak, remind them that the man in our story could not talk or see. Explain how Jesus' miraculous healing proved He is God.

A CANDY BY ITS WRAPPER

Jesus told the Pharisees that a "tree is known by its fruit" (12:33). Illustrate this by holding up different pieces of candy in front of the class. Ask the children how they know what type of candy is in your hand (the wrapper!). Tell the children that our words are like candy wrappers—they reveal what's in our heart (12:34–35).



GOOD FRUIT V. BAD FRUIT

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, paper plates, craft sticks, glue, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Have children color and cut the picture of the tree and verse from the craft sheet. Glue the tree and verse to a paper plate. Use tape to attach a craft stick to the bottom of the paper plate.

Good Fruit v. Bad Fruit
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees • Matthew 12:22–37



AGES 6–8



THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

Before class, use a red dry erase marker to draw a heart on a marker board. Then use a black dry erase marker to write some sins inside the heart. Finally, use a black permanent marker to write “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” inside the heart. In class, ask the children which sins can be forgiven. Use an eraser to erase the sins as the children list them. When you come to “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” show that it cannot be erased (be sure that the permanent marker will erase with white board cleaner before doing this activity). Tell the children that we will learn why in today’s lesson.

NO NEUTRALITY

Bring two hand towels to class, one white and the other dark. Place the towels on the floor parallel to each other. Hold a competition to see who can keep one foot on each towel the longest as you gradually move the towels farther apart (rest of body off the ground). Play until everyone fails. There is no neutrality when it comes to Jesus: We are either with Him (two feet on white towel) or against Him (two feet on dark towel) (Matt 12:30).



WORDS THAT OVERFLOW

Place a clear glass cup in a 9-by-13 inch pan. Fill the glass to the brim with water. Bump the glass slightly and show how water spills out. In a similar way, our words spill out of our hearts as we go through the “bumps” of each day. Next, place a few drops of dark food coloring in the water and stir. Explain that the dark water represents sin. Bump the glass again so the dark water spills out. Ask the children what kinds of words spill out of their heart.

WHAT IS INSIDE MUST COME OUT

The source of all behavior is the heart. Although we may be able to fool people for a while, God is never fooled by actions that do not come from right motives. This can be illustrated to the children by filling a ketchup bottle with chocolate syrup before class. Show the children the bottle and ask them what’s inside. Are they sure? Show them that what we see on the outside is not always what is really on the inside. God always knows what is really on the inside of our hearts, so we can never fool Him.

The Good and the Bad
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1

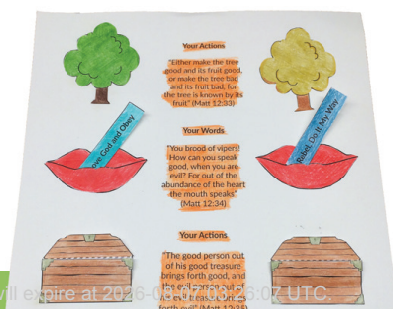


THE GOOD AND THE BAD

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheets, glue, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Each student should receive one base sheet with the main title, the subtitles and the verses. Identify the things on the left as the good side and the bad on the right. Glue two trees at the top on either side of the verse. Have them draw good fruit on the tree on the left and bad fruit on the tree on the right. Next, have them cut out the lips and the cards. Cut a slit into each set of lips. Glue the lips to either side of the second verse and insert the cards into the appropriate set of lips. Finally, cut out the two treasure chests and fold them on the dotted lines so the treasure chest can open and close. Glue one to each side of the third verse. Color a red heart to the center of the treasure chest on the “good” side and the black heart to the center of the treasure chest on the “bad” side.



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

A TRUE FAN

Wear the hats of two rival sports teams (at the same time) as you begin your lesson (USC & UCLA, Texas & Oklahoma, Michigan & Ohio State, etc.). Try to explain to the class that you are an equal fan of both teams. When the class protests, ask them why you cannot be a true fan and root for two rival teams. Tell the class that today we're going to learn about the two teams that divide all of humanity: God's team and Satan's. And just like with sports teams, there is no middle ground. We're either on God's team or Satan's (Matt 12:30).

UNDENIABLE EVIDENCE

Read Romans 1:18 to the class. Explain that today we're going to meet a group of people who tried to "suppress the truth" (Rom 1:18). After seeing a miracle they couldn't deny, the Pharisees claimed that Jesus got His supernatural power from Satan (Matt 12:24). Their answer was based on what they wanted to believe, not on the evidence. As you listen to today's lesson, will you be open to the truth of God's Word?



ILLUSTRATE

ILLOGICAL AND INCONSISTENT

Jesus refuted the Pharisees' argument by showing that it was both illogical and inconsistent. First, He used a proverb to show that it was illogical (does not make sense) (Matt 12:25–26). Illustrate this concept by pretending to fight with yourself. Next, Jesus showed that the Pharisees' argument was inconsistent (saying multiple things that cannot all be true) (12:27). Illustrate this concept with the following flawed statement: "Kevin is smarter than Daniel. Daniel is smarter than Tim. Tim is smarter than Kevin (it may help to write this on the board). Ask the children to explain why these statements are inconsistent.

A KINGDOM DIVIDED CANNOT STAND

Treason is a serious crime because it threatens to destroy a nation from within. As Jesus told the Pharisees: "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand" (12:25). Benedict Arnold, an American general during the American Revolutionary War, infamously defected to the British Army. However, his plot to surrender the fortifications he oversaw at West Point, New York to British forces was exposed in September 1780.



APPLY

EVERY CARELESS WORD

Ask the children to imagine that every phone conversation they have ever had, every text message they have ever sent, and every Facebook post they have ever made has been recorded and been made available to their parents to read and examine. How would they feel? Explain that while these forms of communication are recorded, it is unlikely that they would ever all be read and thoroughly inspected by our parents. But every careless word we've ever spoken or written will one day be examined by someone with far more authority than our parents: God. Our words show so clearly what is in our hearts that we will be judged according to every thoughtless word we speak (Matt 12:36–37). What do your unguarded words show about your heart? Our words provide a true picture of what is in our hearts (12:33, 35).