

## **The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 20**

### **The Ministry of Christ in Galilee –28 AD and 29 AD**

In this lesson we will continue the study of the events and teachings that happened in Jesus' life during his long ministry in Galilee from 28 AD to 29 AD. That ministry took place between His return from Judea and Samaria and His final return to Judea which ended in His crucifixion in 30 AD. The four Gospels have these events recorded, but not necessarily in a chronological order. Some of the events are recorded in their respective Gospel accounts as happening "one day" which doesn't set a time. Luke's Gospel comes closest to being chronological. In the last lesson we finished with Jesus' answer to the complaint that His disciples did not fast. We resume the history with the record of another complaint from the Pharisees.

**Matthew 12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.**

**Mark 2:23-24 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"**

**Luke 6:1-2 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"**

This was permitted according to the law in Deuteronomy 23:25 "If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain."

**Matthew 12:2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."**

What Jesus' disciples were doing wasn't unlawful according to the Mosaic Law, but only according to the traditions of the Pharisees.

**Matthew 12:3-4 He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread--which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.**

**Mark 2:25-26 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest,<sup>1</sup> he entered the house of**

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<sup>1</sup>*Abiathar was the son of the High Priest Ahimelech who was serving when David asked for bread. Abiathar wasn't the High Priest yet, but it was "in his days."*

**God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”**

**Luke 6:3-4 Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”**

This was the account of that event in 1 Samuel 21:6 “So the priest (*Ahimelech the High Priest*) gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.”

As the leader of the clan of Aaron (the priesthood), the High Priest in David’s day had the ultimate disposal of the consecrated bread under his authority:

Leviticus 24:9 “It (the bread) belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.”

The point that Jesus was making here, though the Pharisees would not have understood it, was that He was the true High Priest of God. All the other High Priests that had served at the Tabernacle and Temple had only been shadows of Him. If the shadow High Priest in David’s day had the authority to serve the used bread of Presence <sup>2</sup> to David’s men instead of to his fellow priests as a slight alteration of the Mosaic practice, surely the true High Priest had the authority to make an alteration in what was only a Pharisaical tradition. Of course, Jesus did not expect the Pharisees to understand the implications of what He was saying here. They were not looking for understanding.

**Matthew 12:5 Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?**

This was just saying that Priests worked in the Temple every Sabbath day, yet this was not considered a violation of the Law.<sup>3</sup> The sacrifices of the Temple which pointed to the Messiah were considered more important than the Sabbath.

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<sup>2</sup> The “bread of the Presence” referred to the twelve loaves of bread which were kept on the Table of Shewbread just in front of the curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. It stood on the right-hand side, while the Lampstand stood on the left, and the Altar of Incense stood between them. The bread was to be replaced every Sabbath (Leviticus 24:8), after which it was usually to be eaten at the Tabernacle by the priests.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers 28:9 “On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil.”

Matthew 12:6-8 **I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’<sup>4</sup> you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”**

From the days of the Exodus, the High Priests in the Temple had only been ministers of a shadow worship. The Temple and Tabernacle before it had only been a shadow of the true Temple. Jesus was both the true Temple and the true High Priest. Thus He was the Lord of the Sabbath:

Hebrews 2:17 “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become **a merciful and faithful high priest** in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”

Therefore, like Ahimelech in David’s day, Jesus had the right to allow His men to gather grain to eat even if the Jewish tradition was right (which it was not).

Mark 2:27 **Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”**

Only Mark contains this comment that Jesus made on that occasion about “the Sabbath was made for man.” The Sabbath, just like the rest of the Law wasn’t made for God’s benefit, but for man’s benefit. Our keeping of the Law only pleases God because He loves us and gave us the Law to benefit us.

Mark 2:28 **So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**

Luke 6:5 **Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”**

Of course Jesus’ answer must have left the Pharisees scratching their heads. They didn’t understand that Jesus was “the Son of Man.” Neither did they understand that He was the true High Priest. At this point Jesus had to speak to the Pharisees in this obscure way. If they had understood that Jesus was saying was that **He** was the Lord of the Sabbath (“Sabbath” comes from the word which means “rest”) they would have accelerated their plans to kill Him.

Below is another incident which is in all three Synoptic Gospels.

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<sup>4</sup> *The whole point of the sacrifices was to point toward the mercy of God. The Pharisees had made the sacrifices themselves into the atonement, not merely a shadow pointing toward the real atonement that the LORD in His mercy would provide Himself. This was the second time in Matthew that Jesus had referred to this passage from Hosea 6:6. He had also referred to it in Matthew 9:10.*

**Matthew 12:9-10a** **Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there.**

**Mark 3:1** **Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there.**

**Luke 6:6** **On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled.**

All three synoptic gospels picked this healing as typical of the atmosphere when Jesus performed His healing inside of a synagogue. There He was usually confronted by the Jewish religious establishment. Evidently the man came up to Jesus after He finished teaching and asked for a healing.

**Matthew 12:10b** **Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”**

**Mark 3:2** **Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath.**

**Luke 6:7** **The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.**

Sensing that Jesus was about to perform a miracle they posed the question of whether or not healing on the Sabbath was sinful so that they could accuse Jesus of being a sinner after He healed the man.

**Matthew 12:11-12a** **He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!**

Jesus posed the question in a way with which most of the members of the synagogue’s congregation could identify. Most of them were farmers. Most of them had rescued livestock on a Sabbath rather than let them suffer. In fact the principal of rescuing lost or distressed livestock was imbedded in the Law of Moses:

Exodus 23:4-5 “If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.

Furthermore, concern for a neighbor’s wellbeing is also in the Law of Moses:

Leviticus 19:18b “Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

Leviticus 19:16b “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD.”

Jesus’ statement demonstrated that the Pharisee had a blasphemous idea about the character of God. As in the story of the Good Samaritan, they were the ones who would leave the injured man in a ditch.

**Matthew 12:12b-13** **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.**

**Luke 6:8-10** **But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored.**

**Mark 3:3-5** **Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.**

Jesus challenged them with the question of the underlying meaning of God’s commands including those related to the Sabbath. Were they for the benefit of mankind or were they for the benefit of God? Were they to reflect an understanding of God’s love and mercy or were they to reflect a belief that God was waiting to find any excuse to punish mankind for slight infractions? He was angered and distressed to find that they, who were the teachers of Israel, understood God so little.

**Matthew 12:14-15** **But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place.**

**Mark 3:6** **Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.**

**Luke 6:11** **But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.**

Instead of rejoicing at the healing, they began to plot Jesus’ death. It was a death that would take just a little less than two years to accomplish. Of course Jesus died on the exact day and hour that the LORD had foreordained and prophesied. It is worth noting that the Herodians were in the plot from the beginning. The Herodians were those who were trying to protect the power of Herod Antipas who ruled in Galilee. Herod could have set Jesus free when Pilate sent

Jesus to him on Passover about two years later. Instead, he sent Jesus back to be crucified. He had been conspiring in that death with the Jewish religious leaders for some time, though for different motives.

The following is Mark's summary of the result of all that Jesus did in Galilee during this period.

**Mark 3:7-8 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.**

This was a huge area for people to come from. It extended about a hundred miles to both the north and south and about fifty miles to the east and west. Some of the people would have walked for days. I expect most of them originally came for the healing.

**Mark 3:9 Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him.**

This tells us that Jesus confined most of His teaching to the shore (mostly the western shore) of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>5</sup> He had discovered earlier the advantage of preaching from a small boat just off of shore (Luke 5:1-3).

**Mark 3:10 For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.**

Jesus forbade the demons to say that He was the Son of God. In the first place, He wasn't ready to publicly affirm that He was the Son of God. The evidence of His miracles was beginning to affirm that by themselves. In the second place the testimony of the demons wasn't meant by them to persuade the people that Jesus was the Son of God. It was rather meant to give the enemies of Jesus ammunition to accuse Him of being allied with Satan, which they did.

**Mark 3:20-21 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family own people heard about this, they went to ~~take charge of~~ arrest him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."**

The NIV translation is problematical. The NIV has "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him" The literal though clumsy sounding translation of this from the Greek is "And having heard of this those of him went out to arrest him." The phrase "those of him" has been variously interpreted as "his own people" (NAS), "his family" (NIV, NRSV), "his friends" (KJV, ASV), and "his relatives" (Darby). I think the translation, "his own people," is probably the best for understanding that this phrase refers to the people of Nazareth. This

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<sup>5</sup> *The Roman province of Galilee lay only on the west coast of the sea of Galilee.*

attempt makes sense considering that the people of Nazareth had tried to stone Him when He had revealed His mission to them a little over a year earlier (Luke 4:16-30) during His last visit. Understood that way, it seems that Nazareth sent a group of men to arrest Jesus, but they weren't successful. That isn't surprising considering that Jesus was usually surrounded by hundreds of supplicants, not to mention His disciples. The Nazarenes would soften their attitude toward Jesus only slightly during His next visit to Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6, Matthew 13:54-58). We will study that visit in Lesson 23.

**Mark 3:22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”**

To the rejection of His own hometown, was added the opposition of the religious leadership from Jerusalem who accused Jesus of being in league with Satan.<sup>6</sup> Beelzebul<sup>7</sup> was one of the other names by which Satan was known to the Jews. We have already seen another of Satan's names, “Azazel,” in the account of Jesus' temptation by Satan in the desert after His baptism by John.

**Mark 3:23-27 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.**

Jesus knew more about Satan and his legions than the teachers of the law ever could. He explained that Satan knew that if the demons and fallen angels that were on Satan's side were to have any chance of succeeding they had to stand together. Of course this argument made no impact on the religious leaders because they didn't really understand or believe the Scriptures.

**Mark 3:28-29 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”<sup>8</sup>**

The Greek word translated “blasphemy” is the Greek word βλασφημέω {blā-sfā-me'-ō}. It basically means “to give a bad or evil report” about something. In this context it meant rejecting

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<sup>6</sup> *I cannot help thinking that the mission sent from the people of Nazareth had its origin in the encouragement of the leaders from Jerusalem.*

<sup>7</sup> *The Greek in Mark is Βεελζεβούλ {be-el-ze-bū'l} which is from the Aramaic בַּעַל זְבוּב {bah'-al zeb-üb'} which means “lord of the fly.” A fitting name considering that flies feed on the dead and lay their eggs there. In the OT it was the name given to the idol worshipped by the Philistines at Ekron (1 Kings 1:2-6)*

<sup>8</sup> *See also Matthew 12:31.*

the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Since it is the Holy Spirit who reveals the truth of the Gospel of Christ, “blasphemy” meant rejection of the Holy Spirit’s teaching of the Gospel of Truth which was an eternal sin. We can have no doubt that whenever Jesus spoke to men the Holy Spirit was there convicting them. These Pharisees had hardened their hearts against such conviction.

**Mark 3:30 He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit.”**

The Holy Spirit was the Spirit of Christ. These supposed “teachers of the Law” were warned that they were committing an “eternal sin” which could never be forgiven.

**Mark 3:31-32 Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”**

**Luke 8:19-20 Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.”**

**Matthew 12:46-47 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”**

After the men from Nazareth had failed to arrest Jesus, they probably put pressure put on Jesus’ family to go and talk with Him. Although Mary would have known the truth about who Jesus was from the beginning, we know that Jesus’ brothers didn’t yet believe on Him (John 7:5). Mary may have gone along to moderate them.

**Mark 3:33-35 “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”**

**Luke 8:21 He replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”**

**Matthew 12:48-50 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”**

John the Apostle, who was Jesus’ first cousin made a point of never mentioning his relationship with Jesus in his writings. Neither did James and Jude, who were two of the half-brothers mentioned here. The Catholic Church might profit from noting that Jesus did not elevate Mary’s status above that of any other believer. Evidently it was after this encounter that Mary joined the

company of women who continually followed Jesus and His disciples <sup>9</sup> around and helped provide for their needs.<sup>10</sup>

**Matthew 12:16-18a** **Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him,**

Here the author of the Gospel of Matthew reminded his readers of the prophecy of “the good tidings” of Isaiah 41:27. The revelation of the Holy Spirit abiding on Christ had been given to John the Baptist at the baptism of Christ:

Matthew 3:16 “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.”

This had signified that Jesus was the Messiah. He was both the “servant” and “chosen one” spoken of in Isaiah 41:27.

**Matthew 12:18b** **and he will proclaim justice to the nations *Gentiles*.**

The Hebrew word translated “nations” here is גוֹיִם {gō'ē} which is the word Jews use for Gentiles to this day. The mission of the Messiah had always been for all of the world. Here Matthew was reminding his Jewish readers of that fact. It had always made them uncomfortable. Shortly after Matthew finished writing his Gospel, it is believed that he departed from Jerusalem forever to minister to the Gentiles in Ethiopia.

**Matthew 12:19** **He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.**

Jesus did not come to raise an insurrection, even though (as the Romans knew) the Jews were primed for it. Jesus simply expounded truth to those who were willing to hear His words and the inner revelation of those words by the Holy Spirit.

**Matthew 12:20a** **A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,**

In His First Advent He would not come with power and destruction, but in weakness and humility. Even when He was arrested, tried, and executed He forbade His disciples to fight for Him.

**Matthew 12:20b** **till he leads justice to victory.**

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<sup>9</sup> *The number of Jesus' party of male disciples came to number close to a hundred.*

<sup>10</sup> *Mark 15:40-41a “Some women were watching (Jesus being taken down from the cross) from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses (Joseph), and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs.”*

The “justice” that He would bring to both the Gentiles and the Jews would involve His paying the penalty for all of mankind’s sins in His own body on the Cross. Christ would be qualified to die for us because He walked throughout His life with complete faith and reliance in the Father’s plan and in His love. He walked without any reliance on His own divine power which He temporarily surrendered at His birth.

At this point a phrase of Isaiah 42:1-4 was left out of Matthew’s quotation of Isaiah. It was Isaiah 42:4a which said, “he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.” That was undoubtedly left out because that will only be fulfilled at Jesus’ Second Advent when He comes to reign.

**Matthew 12:21** **In his name the nations Gentiles will put their hope.”**

This finished the quotation from Isaiah. You will notice that Christ came for all the Gentiles as well as all the Jews.

**Matthew 12:22-24** **Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”**

**Luke 11:14-15** **Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. But some of them said, “By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.”**

We must keep in mind that Jesus cast out many demons during this period. These passages from Matthew and Luke might have been referring to the same episode, but I believe it was two different episodes which recorded the standard reaction of the unbelieving Pharisees to what was happening. After all, they had to come up with some explanation or they would have to agree that Jesus might be the promised Messiah who was the Son (descendant) of David.

**Matthew 12:25-27** **Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people sons <sup>11</sup> drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.**

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<sup>11</sup> *The Greek word used here is υἱός {hwē-o's} which means “sons,” not “people” or “followers” as some translations have it. Alternative arguments have been made as to whom this refers, either exorcists of the established order, or the disciples of Jesus. The bulk of opinion seems to lie on the side of the latter, although the NIV, by their translation here and in Luke 11:19 below seems to want to take the interpretive choice out of our hands.*

**Luke 11:16-19** Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers sons<sup>12</sup> drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

The accusation of the Pharisees, even if unspoken, was familiar to Jesus. That is why it says He “knew their thoughts.” On some occasions the Pharisees would demand to see another sign from heaven to confirm that the casting out had been done by the power of God.

**Matthew 12:28-29** But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong-man’s mighty one’s<sup>13</sup> house and carry off plunder<sup>14</sup> his possessions unless he first ties up the strong-man mighty?<sup>15</sup> Then he can ~~rob~~ plunder his house.<sup>16</sup>

**Luke 11:20-22** But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. “When a strong-man mighty one,<sup>17</sup> fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

Jesus explained that Satan and his demons were on the same side. Those demons who had succeeding in possessing a human body were not only most content in that state, but they were also some of Satan’s best soldiers. For Satan to cast them out wouldn’t have been in Satan’s interest.

The similar teachings in following passages in Matthew and Luke are recorded in a slightly different order in Luke. However, I have copied them in the order used in Matthew.

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<sup>12</sup> See note above on Matthew 12:27.

<sup>13</sup> The Greek word here is ἰσχυρός {ē-skhü-ro's}. It means “mighty” or “strong.” There is no “man” in the text. Satan is the mighty or strong one to which it refers here.

<sup>14</sup> Both Strong’s and Thayer’s Greek lexicon give the translation of this Greek word διαπράζω {dee-ar-pad'-zo} as “plunder.”

<sup>15</sup> The Greek word here is ἰσχυρός {ē-skhü-ro's}. It means “mighty” or “strong.” There is no “man” in the text. Satan is the mighty or strong one to which it refers here.

<sup>16</sup> Obadiah 1:5 and Jeremiah 49:9 describe how Esau (the figurative name for Satan) would be thus robbed.

<sup>17</sup> The Greek word here is ἰσχυρός {ē-skhü-ro's}. It means “mighty” or “strong.” There is no “man” in the text. Satan is the mighty or strong one to which it refers here.

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

Luke 11:23 **“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.**

There are only two sides to the struggle. Satan and his angels and demons are on one side. There is no neutral ground in the struggle. Although Satan uses the human race, he hates them. He was a murderer from the beginning when he engineered Adam’s fall hoping mankind would share his own condemnation. Those who attempt to stand on the great battlefield under their own banner will be scattered and become casualties of the war.

Matthew 12:31-32 **And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 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.**

The people who were hearing the Word of Christ and seeing the miracles were being spoken to by the Holy Spirit. If they rejected what the Holy Spirit was trying to teach them they could never be saved or forgiven since knowledge of the Gospel of Christ could only come through revelation by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 12:33-35 **“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.**

This is a principal that is taught many times in scripture. Only a heart and mind rooted in faith in the LORD of Grace can produce the righteousness that God requires. This is the same concept taught in James:

James 1:18 **“He (*God*) chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”**

The Pharisees who were rejecting the central truth embodied in Christ couldn’t possibly say anything, however innocuous it sounded, that wasn’t essentially evil. In their mouths, instead of life, was death.

Matthew 12:36-37 **But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

The words they spoke either openly or in their hearts against the message of the Holy Spirit, which they were hearing and seeing, would condemn them.

**Matthew 12:38-39** Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.”<sup>18</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

**Luke 11:29** As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

The word translated “generation” here is γενεά {ge-ne-ä’}. It is the word which is the root of our word “genealogy.” The term here refers to the fact that those Jesus was talking to were the descendants of those who had inherited the Promises and the Word of God. Jesus was saying that those Pharisees, who were descendants of the Old Testament fathers, were “wicked and adulterous.” “Adulterous” means following other gods than the LORD.

The miracles of raising people from the dead, and healing others should have been sign enough. What they were asking for was something like the sign that had been given John the Baptist at the Jordan River. They would never have that sign.<sup>19</sup> They would be given a greater sign.

**Matthew 12:40** For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish,<sup>20</sup> so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

**Luke 11:30** For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.

The sign that they would be given was foreshadowed in the Book of Jonah. “Three days and three nights” is an unequivocal definition of the time of Jesus’ resurrection. That makes the common contention that Jesus was crucified on Friday night and raised on Sunday morning impossible. We will delve into this matter more thoroughly when we get to the lessons on the Crucifixion and the time that it happened. We shall see that, according to Scripture, Jesus was crucified on the day of the Passover in 30 A.D., which was on Wednesday.

**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.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> As in Luke 11:16.

<sup>19</sup> The Father did speak publicly to Jesus on the road into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday after Jesus called out to Him: John 12:28 “‘Father, glorify your name!’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’”

<sup>20</sup> Jonah 1:17

**Luke 11:32 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.**

“The judgment with the men of this generation” does not refer to the Great White Throne Judgment<sup>22</sup> at which the men of Nineveh who repented will not appear. Instead, it refers to the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation by the Romans in 70 A.D. This fulfilled the judgment prophesied in Ezekiel 4:6.

**Matthew 12:42 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<sup>23</sup> to listen to Solomon’s wisdom,<sup>24</sup> and now one greater than Solomon is here.**

**Luke 11:31 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.**

Similarly, the Queen of Sheba who came to Jerusalem seeking truth would be a historical witness for the justice of the LORD in destroying that “generation” of Jews who ignored the truth taught by God’s own Son. Solomon’s wisdom was merely a worldly wisdom. The wisdom of Jesus was the Word of God.

**Matthew 12:43 “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.**

**Luke 11:24a “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.**

There are three types of fallen angels in Scripture. First, there are those who have not yet been cast down to earth and live throughout the universe. Second, there are those who have been

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<sup>21</sup> Not coincidentally, Jonah preached for three days in Nineveh, and then they were given a forty-day grace period before the LORD would bring destruction on the city. Jesus preached three years to Jerusalem (from the Passover of 27 A.D. to the Passover of 30 A.D.), and then gave them a forty-year grace period. Unlike the Ninevites they didn’t repent. They were destroyed in 70 A.D.

<sup>22</sup> That is the judgment of all unbelievers at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:11-15).

<sup>23</sup> If someone traveled south from Judea down the Arabian Peninsula, when they came to Sheba one had reached the Indian Ocean. It was literally the end of the earth (or land). There was no more land to the south, only the Indian Ocean. The Greek word γῆ {gā’} can mean “earth” or “land.”

<sup>24</sup> 2 Chronicles 9:1-12

imprisoned in “the abyss” since the flood. Third, there are those who have been cast down to earth but have not been imprisoned in the Abyss. These last kind are called demons or evil spirits. They are disembodied spirits, but seek to find physical bodies to possess. Those bodies can be human or animal, but they prefer human bodies. It was these evil spirits which Jesus would cast out, much to their distress.

The comment about “seeking arid places” makes these two verses part of the verses that seem to indicate that demons have an antipathy to water.

**Luke 11:24b-26 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.”**

**Matthew 12:44-45 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”**

The occasion for this lesson came up when Jesus had just cast a demon out of a person. At that time this teaching served as a warning to both the Pharisees and the person who had recently had a demon cast out.

The teaching is also applicable to this or any other generation. Once having rejected the Word of God, and the gift of the Cross, a person, generation, or nation will be worse off than they were before, because they will replace God’s truth with some kind of false religion, whether humanism, communism, paganism, or some other false religion.

At the time he wrote the following Josephus was an unbelieving Jew.<sup>25</sup> Yet he testified as to the wickedness of that generation and the one that followed it which saw the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD:

Wars of the Jews, Book V, Chapter 10, Verse 5 by Flavius Josephus – “I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly: That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.”

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<sup>25</sup> *Josephus later became a believer. His Antiquities of the Jews was written after that faith.*