

Matthew 12:14-21

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[0 : 00] So, we're in Matthew 12, and as we have at least one person who's not been to us before, I'll tell you that we are going through Matthew's Gospel, and we've got to chapter 12.

And I'll do a short summary this morning anyway about what that means. But chapter 12 is a pivotal point for us.

It's the point at which I'm going to get myself out of kilter with my own notes. Already. At the end of chapter 12, there's an extreme change in Jesus's ministry.

You remember that Matthew's Gospel is written to the Jews, and it's written for the sake of the Jews, who have for millennia expected Jesus to come.

They've been looking for their Messiah. And he turns up, and they reject him. And this part of Matthew chapter 12 results in, when you get to the end of chapter 12, they will have committed an unforgivable sin as a nation.

[1 : 20] And then that nation will be effectively told, you've blown it. You cannot any longer be the harbingers of the word of God to the world.

And they are promised judgment, which those of us who've studied a little bit of church history will know that that judgment came in AD 70.

So roughly 40 years later, the Romans besieged Jerusalem, and no one could escape other than those who God had provided for, who did escape just before the war was built around Jerusalem.

So there was this, they're heading for this judgment because of what happens in chapter 12. And so what happened was, in chapters 1 to 12 of Matthew's Gospel, what we see is a very public ministry of Jesus.

He's doing his signs and wonders very, very publicly in order to say to the Jews, I am the one you've been waiting for. And they accused him of operating in Satan's power.

[2 : 26] They accused Jesus of basically serving Satan. That was their unforgivable sin. So from chapters 13 to the end, it becomes much more private.

He does it to select groups of people. He uses it to train disciples. He uses it to train the remnant, the ones who believed. You also find that the first 12 chapters, he focuses on the nation, whereas the latter chapters, he focuses only on the remnant, the ones who did believe, a minority.

He used the miracles in the first half to prove who he was to the nation. But in the second half, he uses the miracles to train the remnant for future preaching of the gospel.

And what Jesus has done throughout the whole of the first few years of his ministry, well, he was only ministering for three years, but for the first bit more than half of that ministry, he was making to the Jews an offer of the kingdom.

Many times he says, because of this, you will know that the kingdom of God has come upon you, or the kingdom of God is here. And the offer to the Jews was, I'm the king, accept the king, and you'll get the kingdom, which is what they'd been promised in the Old Testament throughout.

[3 : 52] And the day had come for the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and they rejected him. So, the teaching about this offer of the kingdom was very prominent in the first half of the gospel, and it slips and becomes absent in the second half of the gospel.

And the teaching is more aimed at the church, and the church is not, never has been, and if you hear this preached, it's wrong. They never have been, oh, we're going to bring in the kingdom.

That's the job of the Jews, and it's been postponed. The Jews have reached a certain point, and then Messiah established the church. The church has taken over the preaching of the gospel for now, but the kingdom, the kingdom as referred to in scripture, which we see in the millennium at the end of time, will revert to the Jews to bring that in.

Because those Jews who were left at that point will be believers. That's another Bible study. But nevertheless, it went from this offer of the kingdom, went from being prominent to being absent.

The teaching up to this point has been by discourse. It's been very, very clear teaching. There's not been any parables. For the latter half of the gospel, his teaching reverts to parables.

[5 : 15] So you have obvious teaching in the first half. You have parables are designed to both conceal and reveal. They conceal it to those who are unbelievers and reveal things to people who are believers, to the people to whom understanding has been given.

And the interim plan, which is the church, right? You can have the kingdom, you can have the kingdom, you can have the kingdom, you can have the kingdom.

Oh, you don't want the kingdom. There's an interim plan to carry you through to when the kingdom is established at the end. And the interim plan is the church.

And it doesn't get a mention in the first half of Matthew's gospel. But in the latter half, it is mentioned more and more. And I say that by way of some introduction.

I'm probably going to turn the screen off now because it's going to look very black with my notes if I don't. Let's see if I can remember how.

[6 : 30] Look at that. I did that all on my own. So we're just under halfway through. And what I want to say is that this part, the part that we're going to deal with today, which is verses 14 to 21.

14 we finished with last time. We're starting with 14 today. We will have done it twice. And there's a reason for that. This passage is very, very key in presenting us the heart of Jesus.

Because when you get through to the session about the unforgivable sin, which will be next time we do Matthew in a fortnight's time, it would be easy to think that you had awakened the wrath of an angry God who wanted to do nothing more than destroy people.

But this passage that precedes that lets you know that that's not the case at all. The last thing Jesus wanted was to do what he does in the latter part of this chapter. He very much did not want to destroy.

He did not want to kill. He did not want to bring AD 70 down on them where the city was sacked, the people starved to death, the temple was burned to the ground and so on.

[7 : 49] So you could look upon that and say, well, you know, he's just an angry man, this God of yours. No, what you read about is that that was a last resort when everything else had failed.

Not failed from his point of view, but failed from the human standpoint. They had rejected him continually. And he had done so much. And I said I was going to give a brief summary.

He, and it's recorded in the first half of Matthew's Gospel, he did nothing but show his love and his power. He, we saw at the start his genealogy.

We know he was born of the right line. We saw the references to his virgin birth in chapter two. And so it was clear that Isaiah had prophesied that when Messiah came, he would come through a virgin.

And Matthew proved that that's exactly what he did. He referred to the Magi's visit, which was incredible, because the Magi's were Gentiles, not Jews.

[9 : 01] And even the Gentiles had read enough scripture to know that Messiah was due. And the Jews didn't. The ones to whom the word of God was given to pass out to the world knew nothing of it.

But these people turned up from the east and gave gifts to Messiah. The gifts that said, not only do we know that Messiah is here and is due, but he's going to die.

The gift of myrrh was to anoint his corpse. So the Gentiles had more knowledge than the Jews had. And Matthew points this out.

Then there's the ministry of John the Baptist, which fulfilled prophecy. He was prophesied in the book of Isaiah and in the book of Malachi, I think, if I've got my books right.

But he was prophesied that there would be a forerunner, someone who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to come and minister and pave the way for Messiah to come three years later.

[10 : 03] And so you had this seven year period, three and a half years under John the Baptist and three and a half years under Jesus, where scripture, ancient scripture was being fulfilled before their eyes.

He then taught in a way that was astounding to them. They had never come across such authority. And then he did miracle after miracle after miracle.

He cast out demons. He healed the sick. He even raised the dead. He did. He healed the man born blind. There were so many healings that took place, all of which fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

And then we're coming up to a miracle in two weeks time that was the culmination of all this. He had done everything to prove to them who he was. And still they rejected him and finally accused him.

Of working on Satan's behalf. So he was continually offering them the kingdom. And they were saying no to both the king and the kingdom.

[11 : 13] And that's the point we reached in verse 14. So Matthew 12, verse 14. And I'm going to read on from there.

But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed him and he healed them and warned them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet.

That's about 700 years prior to this. Okay. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet. 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. He will not quarrel nor cry out. Nor will anyone hear his voice in the street.

A battered reed he will not break off. And a smouldering wick he will not put out. Until he leads justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope.

[12 : 22] Now that, to say that to a Jew is anathema. Because the Jews hated. They were sent to take the word of God to the Gentiles. Because they hated the Gentiles. If a Gentile was bleeding to death by the side of the road.

They walk around him and walk on. Such was their hatred. Of the people they were supposed to be loving. In the name of their God. And so to pick a prophecy that says.

And in his name. In Jesus' name. The Gentiles will hope. Was a real. Was like sticking a knife in. So. We've already said.

The ministry takes a turn at this point. And goes away from the Jews. Now we'll see when that actually happens. Next time we study Matthew. But what we've got here.

Which is proof of what I've been saying. Is that their consideration was. How can I destroy that? How can we destroy this man? He never hurt anybody. Only loved people.

[13 : 29] Brought the truth to the nation. And they only wanted to destroy him. The truth was so offensive. It makes me think of a lot of things. That happen politically today.

I'm not going to off on a tangent. But there's a lot goes on. Where people. Particularly in politics. Hate the truth. They hide from the truth.

They obfuscate about the truth. They have no interest in the truth. And in fact. If you start telling the truth. They will hate you too. And in America at the moment. You start telling the truth.

They lock you up. And they won't even tell you. What the charges are. It's awful. The state of affairs the world is in. But in verse 15.

It says. When Jesus knew this. He withdrew from there. So they had the king of kings in their midst. They rejected him.

[14 : 21] And he withdrew. For him to withdraw from the people he loved. Was a very costly thing. But yet it showed his wisdom.

It's quite a. Quite an enigmatic. A mysterious thing. That. He has come to die.

And he knows he's going to die. But they want to kill him. Which you'd think. He would stay for. Given that that's what he's there for.

But he doesn't. And that's because he's on a timetable. The feast of Passover. Prophesized the death of Jesus. And he was to die at Passover.

And so by withdrawing from there. He postponed his own death. To the point where it was appropriate. And we know from studies of the crucifixion. And we'll get to it later on in Matthew.

[15 : 23] That he died at Passover. Exactly when the prophet said he would die. Or when the feast said he would die. Because the feast itself. He fulfilled the feast. In a.

Minute. Perfect way. He was hanging on that cross. At the same time as they were slaying the Passover lambs. So.

It was wise. Because there's no point in looking for trouble. If you've got gangs out to get you. There's no point in waiting for them to get you. But it was also wise. Because it allowed scripture to be fulfilled to the letter.

And. And when they said they wanted to destroy him. They used the word. Apollumai. In Greek. Which means to destroy completely. It means to kill.

To make. To cease to exist. If you like. So they weren't messing about. They didn't just want to give him a hard time. They wanted him dead. And.

[16 : 29] He was ready to die for us. But only in a manner that was ordained by God. And what we read. As we read on.

What it says is. In verse. In verse. In verse. At the end of verse 15. Or the second part. Many followed him.

And he healed them all. And warned them not to tell who he was. So. First thing that came to me was. He didn't only heal those who believed.

It may have been a majority. Of those who believed that followed him. But I'm sure among them. Would have been people. Who didn't want to. You know. I don't want to get religious. But I'm fed up of being a cripple. Or I'm fed up of being ill.

Or I'm fed up of this. Withered arm that doesn't work. Or whatever. So there would have been people. Who went along to see what they could get. But he didn't pick them out. And say.

[17 : 24] Well you're a believer. I heal you. But you're not. So I won't. Because God loves humanity. He loves us all. And so he healed all of them. Plus. The healing of all of them.

Gave testimony to those unbelievers. That might have turned them to believers. But I think the point I'm making here. Is he had compassion on those who had no compassion for him.

And that's a model for us. When you start sharing the gospel out there. Where the great public are. Some of them hate your guts.

And some of them will say very strange. I had one chap once. Who was rather drunk. And he clenched his fist. And he said. I'm going to hit you.

And I said. Well. I won't hit you back. And. He had a coat in his hand. And he went round the crowd. Saying. Hold my coat will you. Hold my coat. And nobody would hold his coat.

[18 : 23] But. But. The point is. It evokes. Hatred. In those. Who have no interest in the truth. And if you challenge.

Behaviors. Which the gospel does. It challenges our behaviors. Some will go. Thank you for challenging my behaviors. And some will go. I hate you. So.

But interestingly. These healings were not for the eyes of the Pharisees. But only for those who followed him.

The religious people were left out. I suspect it might be similar. If he came to the England today. That there would be whole churches of so-called Christians.

Who would say. Who is this man? You know. We don't preach you in our church anymore. And this is a sad thing to say. But I suspect there'd be a lot of it.

[19 : 19] And. He would go to. Families. And to people who were. Seemingly nondescript. But are prepared to listen.

And he would share himself with them. And. This brought something else to mind. Which is. Apart from those occasions.

When he was on public display. He wasn't particularly well known. He didn't stand out in a crowd. You know. If I was trying. If I was ever empowered.

To carry on such a ministry as this. I would probably dress in something. That no one could miss. And I'd probably set up a big stage somewhere. With lights and speakers. And everything else. And I would invite everybody to come.

But. He didn't do that. And in the previous chapter. I think it was last week. It might have been the week before. We read. I am gentle. And humble in heart.

[20 : 17] Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me. And. He was humble. He applied force to no one. He didn't put anybody's arm up their back.

And say. You must follow me. I am at the moment. Reading about. Calvin. In preparation for some future studies. And Calvin was Hitler-esque.

About the way he shared the gospel. I mean he. He. Locked people up. For simply smiling. In the meeting. It was. Tyrannical.

Jesus was never tyrannical. He was. Humble. And lowly in heart. He invited people to follow him. And that should be where we are. It should be.

Our way. Is. Gentle. And humble. And handing out invitations. But he kind of disappeared. From the Pharisees view. And spent his time.

[21 : 15] With those who were interested. And what we're about to see. In a couple of weeks time. Is. A national rejection. Where people didn't only show.

They weren't interested. They showed they were vehemently. Against him. But he didn't make a great fuss. He didn't seek any fame. For its own sake. He was simply.

Showing kindness. Compassion. And establishing. His credentials. As Messiah. And he's done that.

Up to this point. Until they say. How can we destroy him? And what we see here. Is the beginning. Of him moving away from. Showing them who he was. There's one more sign to come.

Later in this chapter. But you can see the preparation. For he's withdrawn from them. He wants nothing to do with them. And he's. Preparing to just push them to one side.

[22 : 16] For them to await. The judgment of AD 70. Which by the end of this chapter. The judgment of AD 70. Becomes an absolute certainty. There is no way to avoid it.

And so Matthew then claims. Verse 17. This was to fulfill. What was spoken through. Isaiah the prophet. So hang on.

He's. Done all these things. For the first half of the gospel. And he reaches this point. Where they're thinking. How can we destroy him. And he takes himself. Away from there.

To fulfill what Isaiah the prophet said. How does that add up. So glad you asked. First thing is.

Isaiah had prophesied. Not only what Jesus would do. In his life. But what he would be like. And as we get further down. These few verses.

[23 : 13] We'll get to what Jesus is really like. And this is important for us. To get in our minds. Before we get to. How he dealt with the unforgivable sin. Because Jesus.

It transpires. Was not some harsh. Wrathful being. That was looking for a way to kill. Far from it. He was looking for a way to restore. Now this quotation.

Which takes up the rest of. Today's passage. Up to verse 21. Is the longest quotation. That Matthew makes. In his gospel. He quotes from scripture.

All over the place. This is the longest one. And. It is a quotation from. Isaiah chapter 42. So if you turn to Isaiah chapter 42. And there are.

There are one or two. Small differences in. The Old Testament. And the New. Just because of the different languages used. Right.

[24 : 17] The. Isaiah was. Written in Hebrew. And the New Testament. Was written in Greek. So there is a. It's not a discrepancy.

It's just. A translational difference. But. What you see in. Isaiah 42. Verse 1. Through to verse 4. You.

See. Exactly. The passage. That we've just read. That Matthew had quoted. So before we read it. We've always learned. When we've done these studies. That what you need to do.

When. The New Testament quotes. The old. Is you need to look at the Old Testament. Scripture. In the round. You don't just pick out. The verses that are picked out. In the quote. But what was the Old Testament.

Speaking about. When that quotation. Was made. Or. You know. When that prophecy. Was given. What came immediately. Before it. And what follows after it. To give you the context.

[25 : 11] In which it was said. And that tells us. How this relates. To the Jews of this day. So. If we look at chapter 41. Verse 25. And we'll just read.

To the end of the chapter. This is God speaking. Through the prophet, Isaiah. And he says this. I have. I have aroused one from the north.

And he has come. From the rising of the sun. He will call on my name. And he will. He will come upon rulers. As upon mortar. A strange way to put things.

He will come upon rulers. As upon mortar. Well the thing about mortar. Is it's hard. And impenetrable. And so. He's come upon.

Israel. Israel. And the leaders of Israel. Are like mortar. They are. Hard and impenetrable. Reading on.

[26 : 12] Even as the potter. Treads clay. Now that. When a potter. Treads clay. He's preparing the clay. To use it to make pots. It must be a messy game.

Because you probably did it. In your bare feet. And there was water. And clay. And you're getting ever so mucky. But. You were preparing. The. Base. Ingredients. For something.

[illegible]

And sometimes destroys people in order to get something better from a nation or a group. So reading on, verse 26, who has declared this from the beginning that we might know?

Or from former times that we may say he is right? And this is a rhetorical question. Who do you know that's declared this from the beginning? There isn't anybody, is there?

[29 : 28] And who has declared it from former times where you can say, yeah, yeah, he was right?
There isn't anyone, is there?

But of course, in, I think it's chapter 42 of Isaiah, we read, I am the Lord, there is no one like me, and I can tell you the end from the beginning.

So what he's saying is you're putting your faith in the wrong place. You're looking for these people who can tell you what it will be like, and there isn't anybody there. So verse 28, but when I look, there is no one, and there is no counsellor among them, who, if I ask, can give an answer.

In other words, this quote that we're about to read comes from a time when God had looked at Israel and said, you are useless.

You are no good to me. You're getting into idolatry, you're worshipping foreign gods, you're giving the people poison instead of food.

[30 : 41] And then he says, verse 1 of 42, Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise his voice, nor make his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish.

He will faithfully bring forth justice. And the word justice can just as easily be translated judgment. It's the same Hebrew word, and it's the same in the Greek as well.

The same word means either justice or judgment. He will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice in the earth.

And it says here, and the coastlands will await expectantly for his law. If you go back to Matthew, that's where the difference occurs in translation.

[31 : 44] And I'll explain it in a moment. So, Sorry, Matthew 12.

So, Matthew says that this thing that's happening during his time that he's reporting on is a fulfillment of this prophecy.

Israel has become useless. And He is saying, Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased.

He's saying that Jesus doing what he has done, he's come up to this point where he has withdrawn, fulfills this prophecy somehow.

And what has been said to Israel right up to this point is, Behold my servant. This is the one I promised you. He's done all the miracles. He's done all the signs. He's done the amazing teaching.

[33 : 08] He's delivered the demon possessed. You have no reason to reject this servant of mine. Behold, look, my servant. I will put my spirit upon him.

We read about Jesus' baptism where the spirit of God descended on him like a dove. And he shall proclaim, this version says, justice or judgment to the Gentiles.

In the New Testament, let me get this right. The word is Torah. My Torah.

He shall proclaim Torah. Torah, the Torah, is known as the first five books of the Bible. So, he's going to proclaim this to the Gentiles because you've rejected him.

But this next bit is so important. He will not quarrel nor cry out. Now, we know that Jesus had more actual power at his disposal than any other human being that has ever walked on the planet.

[34 : 23] And when they threatened to destroy him, if you remember when he was hanging on the cross, Peter chopped off Malchus's ear. And he said, in fact, it was before he was hanging on the cross, but he was on his way to the cross.

See, I avoided a correction there. He was on his way to the cross, and he had, Malchus got his ear chopped off, and Jesus said, don't you know that I could call twelve legions of angels to deliver me from this hour?

The one who had enough power, when they came to arrest him, they went to lay hands on him, and the power of God hit the lot of them, and they all fell flat on their backs.

He had absolute power to destroy them should he wish to. But he didn't wish to. And they arrested him because he let them.

So what you have here is a bruised, the New Testament says a battered reed, the Old Testament says a bruised reed, he will not break off, and a smouldering wick he will not put out.

[35 : 29] Do you know, there's something, there's a point of application for us in this. I've come across people as I've talked to them, and they feel like, I've just got nothing to offer, I've got nothing to give, I'm useless.

Reeds. Reeds were hollow and quite strong and useful, and they used to make musical instruments from them, unless they'd been crushed or bruised.

Though when crushed or bruised, they do continue to live, as long as they're still attached to the root. And so the point is, if you break off the reed from the root, you kill it.

But as long as it's attached to the root, it is still alive. And to some extent, contributes life to its surroundings. Similarly with a smouldering wick, a smouldering wick can be rekindled, a bit of blowing, a bit of oxygen, add a bit of fuel, and it'll come back to life.

Whereas if you snuff it out, it gives no light whatsoever. And so the analogy is that Israel had become useless, but he would not cut it off to die.

[36 : 43] And we should also take application for ourselves, that when we feel like we are useless, or there is nothing we can do to improve our amount of light that we give into the kingdom, that he doesn't want us to be cut off.

In almost all circumstances, he will be patient with us, and he will help to rekindle the smouldering wick, or straighten the bruised reed. Of course, Israel in this situation, were not for being restored.

They were seeking to kill him, they were seeking to destroy him. But it's important for us to know that it wasn't the heart of God to destroy them at all. His heart was to restore them.

And he gave them every opportunity. And what we're coming up to later in chapter 12 is a time when they finally, completely and officially reject him.

But for us, the application is that when we feel like we're useless, or we feel like we can't give out any light, we should trust him, and we should stay attached to the root, or ask him to rekindle our smouldering wick, and not have this expectation that we're automatically cut off.

[38 : 05] It's not in God's heart to cut anyone off. Goes on to say, he will faithfully bring forth justice or judgment.

And the word judgment is probably preferable, because he is not, or his desire to bring forth his judgment into the earth, his Torah.

The word used in the Old Testament certainly is Torah. He will bring his Torah forth, and he will do so through the Gentiles.

He won't be, he will not be crushed by the ineffective witness of his elect nation, but will carry on to see justice established in the earth. This difference in phraseology between the Old Testament and Matthew's handling of the passage in the New Testament.

Matthew refers to Gentiles or nations, according to the New American Standard Bible and the King James Bible, old and new, both say Gentiles.

[39 : 15] The Greek word used is *ethnos*, from which we derive our word ethnicity or ethnic. And in context here, Matthew is also writing to Jews, and he is meaning anyone who is not Jewish.

So the use of the word *ethnos* means anyone who's not Jewish, the Gentiles or the *goyim* as they were known. Isaiah speaks of the coastlands, or in the King James Version, the Isles.

This in Hebrew can simply mean places of habitation other than Israel. So it carries the same meaning, so don't be confused by the difference in translation.

Of course, this was a very, very contentious and challenging thing to say to Jews, whose national pride caused them to arrogantly claim that they were God's people.

When you tell a Jew that actually you have failed and God's going to bring his Torah through the Gentiles to the world instead of through the Jews, it is an incredibly serious put down.

[40 : 32] And so what Matthew has done with this passage up to this point is he has prepared us for this final calamity where the Jews reject their Messiah, and he's prepared us for it by showing us the heart of God to restore a bruised reed.

When you think of restoring a bruised reed, it's actually, when you think that reeds normally sit in reed beds, and there are likely to be hundreds of them, and finding the one that's bruised and helping that one is a mission.

But the heart of God is to restore the bruised reed and to rekindle the smouldering wick, not to reject. And he has been incredibly patient with the Jews up to this point.

And as we go into the next part of Matthew's Gospel, we need to understand God's incredible patience for the nation that he has given every opportunity to to accept him as Messiah and receive the kingdom.

The offer of the kingdom has been on the table up to this point. And after the next part of Matthew 12, the offer of the kingdom to Israel is going to be withdrawn, or perhaps it would be better to say postponed, because that generation will not see what they could have seen had they accepted the king.

[42 : 08] Had they accepted the king, they would also have received the kingdom from the king with that glorious king at the head of the kingdom. They would have ruled with him over the kingdom that was being set up if they had accepted the king, which of course they didn't.

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