

# **The Gospel of Matthew**

## **Booklet 14– Four Lessons**

**Lesson 34 - Matthew 12:1-19**

**Lesson 35 - Matthew 12:15-30**

**Lesson 36 - Matthew 12:31-37**

**Lesson 37 - Matthew 12:38-50**



**International ESL/Bible Lessons**  
Intermediate to Advanced Level

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Much of the material in these lessons come from *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I*, by William Barclay. Daily Study Bible Series. Other content comes from Bible Commentaries, Dictionaries and on-line sources. All pictures are from Google Images.

## The Gospel Of Matthew

Material for this section is from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: The Daily Study Bible Series*. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1975. Matthew's Gospel is carefully designed.

**Section One** includes The Genealogy of Jesus, The Birth Story, The John the Baptist Sequences, Baptism and Temptation of Jesus.

**Section Two**, from Chapters 5-7 is The Sermon on the Mount, or the Teachings of Jesus. These are gathered into a group from all the time of Jesus's ministry. These are the *words* of Jesus.

**Section Three** shows the actions or *doings* of Jesus.

Chapter 8 shows the Miracles of Jesus.

Chapter 9 shows the growing opposition to Jesus

Chapter 10 shows the choosing of the Disciples and sending them out

Chapters 11 and 12 show Jesus working with the people and incurring the wrath of the Pharisees.

Chapter 12 indicates crucial decisions made by Jewish leaders: to bring about the death of Jesus.

# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 34 - Matthew 12: 1-19 In Charge of the Sabbath

12 <sup>1-2</sup> One Sabbath, / Jesus was strolling with his disciples / through a field of ripe grain. / Hungry, / the disciples were pulling off the heads of grain / and munching on them. / Some Pharisees reported them to Jesus: / “Your disciples are breaking the Sabbath rules!”

<sup>3-5</sup> Jesus said, / “Really? / Didn’t you ever read / what David and his companions did / when they were hungry, / how they entered the sanctuary / and ate fresh bread off the altar, / bread / that no one but priests / were allowed to eat? / And didn’t you ever read in God’s Law / that priests carrying out their Temple duties / break Sabbath rules all the time / and it’s not held against them?

<sup>6-8</sup> “There is far more at stake here than religion. / If you had any idea what this Scripture meant / —‘I prefer a flexible heart / to an inflexible ritual’ / —you wouldn’t be nitpicking like this. / The Son of Man is no lackey / to the Sabbath; / he’s in charge.”

<sup>9-10</sup> When Jesus left the field, / he entered their meeting place. / There was a man there with a crippled hand. / They said to Jesus, / “Is it legal to heal on the Sabbath?” / They were baiting him.

<sup>11-14</sup> He replied, / “Is there a person here / who, / finding one of your lambs fallen into a ravine, / wouldn’t, / even though it was a

Sabbath, / pull it out? / Surely kindness to people / is as legal as kindness to animals!" / Then he said to the man, / "Hold out your hand." / He held it out and it was healed. / The Pharisees walked out furious, / sputtering about how they were going to ruin Jesus.

### ***Vocabulary***

1. To stroll: To walk in a leisurely way often while talking with people.
2. Grain: Wheat, rice, barley, corn, etc. These are made into flour for bread.
3. To munch: To eat, often to eat with noise.
4. Sanctuary: Here it means a religious building. A church.
5. Nitpicking: Fault-finding. Petty unimportant criticism.
6. Lackey: Manservant. Flunky. Errand boy. (Not a nice thing to call someone.)
7. Crippled hand: Non-working hand. Handicapped. (Offensive term)
8. To bait someone: To dare or tempt them to do something. To harass someone.

## **Bait as an idiom**

1. To fish or cut bait: To do what needs to be done or else step aside and allow somebody else to do it.
2. To rise to the bait: To react to something, especially to temptation or provocation, in precisely the way that somebody wants you to, e.g. by getting angry when somebody teases you.

## **Questions:**

1. What day of the week do you think this happens on?
2. What day of our week is the Sabbath for Jews?
3. About how many rules did the Jews have for all phases of living?
4. What is the difference between a rule and a commandment?
5. How does Jesus show he knows the writing of the Torah or Old Testament?
6. Why would the Pharisees be *furious* with Jesus?

## **Notes**

1. The Sabbath is the worship day of the Jews. It begins / even today / at sundown on Friday / and ends at sundown on Saturday. Our worship day, as Christians, begins on Sunday.
2. Taking the grains with their hands was not illegal at all. *When you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.* Deut. 23:25.

3. So the problem was not that it was illegal, but that it broke the rule for work on the Sabbath. The over 600 rules had 39 for the Sabbath. And the one the disciples broke involved the reaping, winnowing, and threshing and preparing a meal.
4. From their point of view, the disciples of Jesus and Jesus himself broke the Sabbath day in front of many people. They were a terrible example of the ultra-religious Jews.
5. Jesus answered or countered the accusation by quoting what David did (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 21:1-6), the work of the priests on the Sabbath, and quoting Hosea the prophet: *I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice.* (Hosea 6:6).
6. These three arguments of Jesus state / that human need / takes precedence over the rules of man. Jesus wanted to help / and serve the hungry, / the sick, / and the needy. He wanted people to truly worship God.
7. Verses 11-14 are critical in the life of Jesus. Here he deliberately and publicly broke the Sabbath Law. The result was a conference of Orthodox leaders to search out a way to eliminate Jesus. They saw Jesus as a Revolutionary and a potential destroyer of the faith and ritual of the Jews.

8. Remember that the Roman General Pompey attacked on the Sabbath and the Jews would not fight or defend on the Sabbath. So Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans (Josephus, *Antiquities. 14.4.2*)
9. From the Internet: “Even in the State of Israel / where Sabbath observance / is the law of the land, / even there / they must have water / and lights on the Sabbath. / If the state of Israel / were to observe "Yom Kippur" / the holiest day of the year according to halachah (Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud.), / there would likely not be a state of Israel today. / Their greatest military victory was fought on the Day of Atonement. / Jewish halachah allows fighting / from a posture of defense or when attacked.”



# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 35 - Matthew 12: 15-30

<sup>15-21</sup> Jesus, / knowing they were out to get him, / moved on. / A lot of people followed him, / and he healed them all. / He also cautioned them / to keep it quiet, / following guidelines set down by Isaiah:

*Look well at my handpicked servant; / I love him so much, / take such delight in him. / I've placed my Spirit on him;/ he'll decree justice to the nations. / But he won't yell, / won't raise his voice; / there'll be no commotion in the streets. / He won't walk over anyone's feelings, / won't push you into a corner. / Before you know it, / his justice will triumph; / the mere sound of his name will signal hope, / even among far-off unbelievers.*

### No Neutral Ground

<sup>22-23</sup> Next a poor demon-afflicted wretch, / both blind and deaf, / was set down before him. / Jesus healed him, / gave him his sight and hearing. / The people who saw it were impressed / —“This has to be the Son of David!”

<sup>24</sup> But the Pharisees, / when they heard the report, / were cynical. / “Black magic,” / they said. / “Some devil trick he's pulled from his sleeve.”

<sup>25-27</sup> Jesus confronted their slander. / “A judge who gives opposite

verdicts / on the same person / cancels himself out; / a family that's  
in a constant squabble disintegrates; / if Satan banishes Satan, / is  
there any Satan left? / If you're slinging devil mud at me, / calling  
me a devil kicking out devils, / doesn't the same mud stick to your  
own exorcists?

<sup>28-29</sup> "But if it's by *God's* power / that I am sending the evil spirits  
packing, / then God's kingdom is here for sure. / How in the world  
do you think it's possible / in broad daylight / to enter the house of  
an awake, / able-bodied man / and walk off with his possessions /  
unless you tie him up first? / Tie him up, / though, / and you can  
clean him out.

<sup>30</sup> "This is war, / and there is no neutral ground. / If you're not on  
my side, / you're the enemy; / if you're not helping, / you're making  
things worse.

### ***Vocabulary***

1. To caution someone: To advise someone to be very careful.
2. Handpicked: Carefully chosen.
3. Commotion: Rioting. Noisy and dangerous gathering.
4. Wretch: A poor person who is extremely miserable.
5. Cynical: Distrustful of human nature. Sarcastic.
6. Slander: Saying false and damaging things. Speaking lies.

## **Idioms**

1. Out to get someone: Deliberately causing another person problems.  
If someone is deliberately changing your programs to make you look bad, they are really *out to get you*.
2. To sling mud: To say insulting or unfair things about someone, especially to try to damage their reputation. *Political campaigns are full of mud slinging*.
3. To send someone packing: To ask someone to leave immediately. To refuse any further hospitality. Get out!!!
4. To clean someone out: To take all his belongs and money. To steal everything openly or little by little.

## **Questions**

1. How do adversaries often treat each other?
2. Why is the strength and gentleness of Jesus often misunderstood?
3. How do you feel about or think about the *powers of darkness* or devils?

## **Notes**

1. The Religious Orthodox people had begun to follow Jesus and find fault with him. They shadowed him and reported back to their leaders. They were out to get him. This chapter marks a

beginning of decisive steps to get rid of Jesus. First they followed, took notes, and reported back.

2. In return we can observe that Jesus was never reckless, but always courageous. Timing was important and Jesus had many things to do before he died.
3. First, Jesus withdrew. The time for the final steps had not yet come. Second, he forbade men to surround him with publicity. He knew other False Messiahs had been around, and he knew how inflammable the Jewish people were. The time was not ripe.
4. The quotation from Isaiah 42:1-4 gives an excellent picture of what Jesus came and comes still to do.
  - To give justice: *The Greeks defined justice as giving to God and to men, that which is their due.* Jesus showed men how to live in such a way that both God and men receive their proper place in our lives.
  - Jesus would not cry aloud like a barking dog to get attention. He was not a drunk or cause of uproars. Think of the nastiness of our political parties. Not that for Jesus! "In Jesus there is the quiet strong serenity of one who seeks to conquer by love, not by strife of words." (Barclay, p. 34, Vol.II)
  - Jesus will not hurt people, but encourage them. He will not break the *crushed reed nor quench the smoking wick.* These word pictures are quite effective. He is the great encourager.

- Jesus will bring the Gentiles hope. Jews set barriers against people different from themselves; Jesus wanted all nations to know God.
5. In spite of witnesses that hated him, Jesus healed the *poor demon-afflicted wretch, both blind and deaf* and the people were amazed, but the Orthodox Jews were outraged. They did not give credit for a miracle, but said Jesus used Black Magic or the work of the devil.
  6. So Jesus will not allow this name-calling and slander. He quite effectively answers them. He didn't much care for mud slinging.
  7. At this time in the Eastern world all illnesses were thought to be demon possession. The Orthodox Jews would use exorcism, as do many faiths today. If it is psychological and the person has confidence in the healer, often it is a cure. But this was both a physical and mental healing. And the people knew the man who was healed. It was real to all of them.
  8. Verse 30 shows us the impossibility of neutrality. Many things make mankind want to be neutral and not choose sides: inertia of human nature, cowardice of human nature, and the comfort of selfish and comfortable inaction. Mark 9:40 says *He that is not against us is for us.*

# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 36 - Matthew 12: 31- 37 Forgiveness

<sup>31-32</sup> “There’s nothing done / or said /that can’t be forgiven. / But / if you deliberately persist / in your slanders against God’s Spirit, / you are repudiating the very One who forgives. / If you reject the Son of Man / out of some misunderstanding, / the Holy Spirit can forgive you, / but when you reject the Holy Spirit, / you’re sawing off the branch / on which you’re sitting, / severing / by your own perversity / all connection with the One who forgives.

<sup>33</sup> “If you grow a healthy tree, / you’ll pick healthy fruit. / If you grow a diseased tree, / you’ll pick worm-eaten fruit. / The fruit tells you about the tree.

<sup>34-37</sup> “You have minds like a snake pit! / How do you suppose / what you say is worth anything / when you are so foul-minded? / It’s your heart, / not the dictionary, / that gives meaning to your words. / A good person produces good deeds / and words / season after season. / An evil person is a blight on the orchard. / Let me tell you something: / every one of these careless words / is going to come back to haunt you. / There will be a time of Reckoning. / Words are powerful; / take them seriously. / Words can be your salvation. / Words can also be your damnation.”

## **Vocabulary**

1. Deliberately: Thoughtfully and intentionally. On purpose.
2. To persist: To continue on and on.
3. To repudiate: To reject. To deny. To disown.
4. To sever: To cut. To disunite. To split.
5. Perversity: Stubborn and unreasonable behavior.
6. Foul-minded: Having a negative or a dirty mind.
7. Blight: Disfigure. Disease. Scar. A destructive form.

Adjective	Noun	Verb	Adverb
Deliberately	Deliberateness	To deliberate	Deliberately
Persistent	Persistence	To persist	Persistently
Repudiated	Repudiation	To repudiate	

## **Questions**

1. What do you think of when we say *unforgiveable sin*?
2. How can you explain the Holy Spirit? Is it real?
3. Jesus is talking strongly to the Orthodox and powerful Jews. How can that help or hurt him?
4. How do you know that a tree is good or dying?

## **Notes**

1. Verses 31-32 are difficult and strong. We must understand this, not from a Christian perspective, but from a Jewish perspective.

- Remember the Day of Pentecost had not come, and the Holy Spirit, as Christians understand it had not occurred at this time.
2. Barclay says on p. 43, Vol. 2, “According to Jewish teaching the Holy Spirit had two supreme function. First the Holy Spirit brought God’s truth to men; second, the Holy Spirit enabled men to recognize and to understand that truth when they saw it. So then a man, as the Jews saw it, needed the Holy Spirit, both to receive and to recognize God’s truth. We may express this in another way. *There is in man a Spirit-given faculty, which enables him to recognize goodness and truth when he sees them.*”
  3. We all know that if a person doesn’t use what he has gifted to him or learned, he will lose that ability. Use it or lose it is the English saying.
  4. The Scribes and Pharisees had formed their own way, not God’s way. They had lost the ability to see God’s hand in Jesus’s actions, or to recognize goodness. They called Jesus evil or demon possessed. Now, when a man reaches that place, repentance is impossible. This man’s idea is unchangeable. God is rejected even if the man says, God. So Jesus says this is the unforgiveable sin.
  5. The state of a man’s heart can be seen through the words he speaks. We don’t need to speak to a man long before we know if the mind of the man is dirty or clean and wholesome.



6. Jesus also said we are accountable for our *idle* words. Words spoken without thought have the conventional restraints removed. That shows what a person is really like.
7. That is also true of words spoken in anger. Generally in anger, the thoughts of a person really come out. How we would like to retract those hurting and cruel words, but we cannot. These are the words that often cause the greatest damage. They can leave an internal wound that will not heal.

# The Gospel Of Matthew

## Lesson 37 - Matthew 12: 38-50 Jonah-Evidence

<sup>38</sup> Later a few religion scholars / and Pharisees got on him. /  
“Teacher, / we want to see your credentials. / Give us some hard  
evidence / that God is in this. / How about a miracle?”

<sup>39-40</sup> Jesus said, / “You’re looking for proof, / but you’re looking for  
the wrong kind. / All you want / is something to titillate your  
curiosity, / satisfy your lust for miracles. / The only proof you’re  
going to get / is what looks like the absence of proof: / Jonah-  
evidence. / Like Jonah, / three days and nights in the fish’s belly, /  
the Son of Man will be gone three days and nights / in a deep grave.

<sup>41-42</sup> “On Judgment Day, / the Ninevites will stand up / and give  
evidence / that will condemn this generation, / because / when  
Jonah preached to them / they changed their lives. / A far greater  
preacher than Jonah / is here, / and you squabble about ‘proofs.’ /  
On Judgment Day, / the Queen of Sheba will come forward / and  
bring evidence / that will condemn this generation, / because she  
traveled from a far corner of the earth / to listen to wise Solomon. /  
Wisdom far greater than Solomon’s / is right in front of you, / and  
you quibble over ‘evidence.’

<sup>43-45</sup> “When a defiling evil spirit is expelled from someone, / it drifts  
along through the desert / looking for an oasis, / some unsuspecting

soul / it can bedevil. / When it doesn't find anyone, / it says, / 'I'll go back to my old haunt.' / On return / it finds the person spotlessly clean, / but vacant. / It then runs out / and rounds up seven other spirits / more evil than itself / and they all move in, / whooping it up. / That person ends up far worse off / than if he'd never gotten cleaned up / in the first place.

"That's what this generation is like: / you may think / you have cleaned out the junk from your lives / and gotten ready for God, / but you weren't hospitable / to my kingdom message, / and now all the devils are moving back in."

### **Obedience Is Thicker than Blood**

<sup>46-47</sup> While he was still talking to the crowd, / his mother and brothers showed up. / They were outside / trying to get a message to him. / Someone told Jesus, / "Your mother and brothers are out here, / wanting to speak with you."

<sup>48-50</sup> Jesus didn't respond directly, / but said, / "Who do you think my mother and brothers are?" / He then stretched out his hand toward his disciples. / "Look closely. / These are my mother and brothers. / Obedience is thicker than blood. / The person / who obeys my heavenly Father's will / is my brother and sister and mother."

## ***Vocabulary***

1. To titillate: To excite someone. To cause a sensation.
2. To get on someone: To give someone a hard time. To pick on.
3. Credentials: Identifications. Qualifications. Diplomas.  
Authentication.
4. To squabble: To argue noisily over something unimportant.
5. To quibble: To make trivial objections. To split hairs.
6. To defile: To dishonor or corrupt something. To destroy the value or sanctity of something.
7. To drift along: To move aimlessly. Wander off from what you should be doing.
8. To bedevil: To cause problems.

## ***Idioms***

1. **To my old haunt or haunts:** A place visited frequently by someone. That restaurant was one of my old haunts when I was in college.
2. **To whoop it up:** A spontaneous, enthusiastic, and possibly excessive positive reaction to an event often characterized by rolling laughter, celebratory high-fives and exclamations such as snap, bam, or booyah. (From the Urban Dictionary.)

- 3. Thicker than blood: In modern society, the proverb "blood is thicker than water" is used to imply that family ties (blood) are always more important (thicker) than the ties you make among friends (water). It generally means that the bonds of family and common ancestry are stronger than the bonds between unrelated people (such as friendship). (Wikipedia)**

***Questions:***

1. What kind of sign or miracle might have satisfied the Jewish leaders?
2. How do you think the common people felt about Jesus and his miracles?
3. Can you quickly tell the story of Jonah?
4. Who was the Queen of Sheba?

***Notes:***

1. Remember the Jews were looking for something from God that was abnormal, but we continually see God at work in the normal. How about a miraculous healing through a doctor?
2. Matthew tells us that Jesus used the example of Jonah. He was in the belly of the whale for three days. Yet Jesus was dead only two days! So that makes a slight discrepancy. Luke 11:29-32 tells this a little differently. He said, "For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Ninevah, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."

3. Jesus is telling them that he is the sign from God. They reject this claim. The Queen of Sheba came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. She was wise. Jesus says she is much wiser than these leaders.
4. Verses 43-45 tell an unusual story and truth about a haunted house or a haunted man. Here the evil spirit is banished from the man, but not destroyed. So, parable like, it tells us that evil can be conquered and driven away, but cannot be destroyed. It is always looking for ways to counter-attack and regain the ground or man it has lost.
5. The reformed or empty space must be filled with good things, or the evil temptations will return. So the only permanent cure for evil is Christian and good action. "The one fatal disease is idleness; even a sterilized idleness will soon be infected." If you pull the weeds from a garden, and do not plant other good plants, the weeds will soon return.
6. Verses 46-50 show that Jesus was never really understood by his family. Blood ties and friendship are different.
7. Friendship and true love are founded on certain things without which they cannot exist. (Barclay, p. 53. Vol. 2)
  - Founded on a common ideal. People can be very different but if they have a common ideal for which they work and to which they work toward, they can be firm friends.

- Founded on a common experience and on the memories that come from it. Working together through a great experience can form a great and lasting friendship.
  - Obedience to one another makes a lasting friendship and love.
8. True kinship is not always a matter of flesh and blood relationship. It is true that blood is a tie that nothing can break and many find their delight and peace in the circle of family. But sometimes those nearest and dearest are the very people who understand him the least.

