

Lesson 13 – 24 October 2010

Christ's Authority Attested

Lesson Scope: [Matthew 12](#)

Lesson Focus

Although this lesson is drawn from last week's lesson scope, the focus is directly on the conflict between the Jewish leaders and Jesus regarding His authority. The divisive issue is that of Sabbath keeping. The Sabbath was a divinely appointed day of rest set by God Himself at Creation. At Sinai God established it as a Jewish holy day. It became a focal point of Jewish life, imbedded in the heart of Judaism.

The Old Testament had strict laws about Sabbath observance. Sabbath desecration was considered among the worst of crimes. Over the years, Jewish tradition had built on the Scriptural law of the Sabbath, adding restrictions to such extremes that they voided God's original intent. Jesus' assertion that He is Lord even of the Sabbath was equivalent to a claim of Deity. The Jewish leaders saw this as a threat to their long-standing authority on Sabbath Day observance.

Jesus used the Scriptures to support His authority, to convince His accusers of His heavenly Father's purpose for the Sabbath Day, and to help them understand the spirit of the Old Testament Law. He told them, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). They were searching the Scriptures with a closed mind, seeing only those things that suited their selfish purposes. They were seeking not the honor that comes from God but that which they received from one another. In this blind unbelief, they refused to acknowledge Jesus' divine authority.

The Scriptures are complete and without contradiction! They do testify of Jesus' authority! We look to them as a support for the teachings of this lesson. Beware of commentators! We must avoid the snare of the Pharisees, who held the doctrines of men above the Scriptures.

The authority of Jesus supersedes all other authority. His Word remains final, even though Satan and evil men resist it.

Lesson Aim: To observe principles related to Jesus' authority.

Theme Verses: [John 5:26, 27](#). For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Lesson Text

Lord of the Sabbath

[Matthew 12:1-13](#)

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. ³But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; ⁴How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? ⁶But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. ⁷But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. ⁹And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

¹⁰And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. ¹¹And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? ¹²How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. ¹³Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

Sovereign Over Satan

[Matthew 12:22-30](#)

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. ²⁵And Jesus knew their

thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: ²⁶And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. ²⁹Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. ³⁰He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Judge of Men's Hearts

[Matthew 12:34-37](#)

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. ³⁵A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. ³⁶But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Questions for Study

Lord of the Sabbath

1. What incidents did the Pharisees use to challenge Jesus' authority? How did Jesus respond?
2. Who is "one greater than the temple- (Matthew 12:6)? Who are "the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7)?"
3. Explain the meaning of "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.

Sovereign Over Satan

4. Who is the "strong man- (Matthew 11:29)?
5. What principles from these verses show that Jesus is sovereign over Satan?

Judge of Men's Hearts

6. From Jesus' statements, list some unchangeable laws of cause and effect.
7. How can words both justify and condemn"

Analyzing the Passage

The Jewish leaders held tenaciously to the Rabbinical laws of the Sab-

bath rather than to the Scriptures. These laws were tedious, cumbersome, and numerous. According to their interpretation, plucking corn (heads of cereal grains such as wheat, barley, and so forth) by the disciples constituted harvesting and threshing, which were forbidden. But Deuteronomy 23:25 allowed for this. The rabbis considered the Sabbath as an end in itself, but Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man's benefit (Mark 2:27) and that a man's needs take precedence over the law of the Sabbath.

Jesus, as Lord even of the Sabbath, always rightly divided the Scriptures. He used the fitting illustrations of David and the priests (Matthew 12:35), as well as the "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7) concept from the Prophets (Hosea 6:6) to emphasize that the spirit of the Law takes precedence over the letter of the Law. To "sacrifice" (keep the letter of the Law) is important, but without "mercy" (the spirit of the law of Christ). it brings condemnation. In their legalistic blindness, the Jewish leaders condemned the guiltless. They were in bondage to the very one they falsely accused Jesus of being under. They were omitting "the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23). "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath chewed no mercy" (James 2:13). Jesus denounced the Pharisees strongly (Matthew 12:34) for casting unfair judgment on others while being themselves "full of deadly poison." Such is the action of an evil heart (Matthew 12:34).

Principles and Applications

Lord of the Sabbath

1. Jesus answered His accusers with the authority of the Scripture (Matthew 12:3-5). As the Son of God, He understood the Scriptures perfectly, and He interpreted them with absolute consistency. Jesus told the Jews, "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.... But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45, 47). Jesus pointed them to the very Scriptures that they thought they knew so well.

2. Christ held the authority of God Himself (Matthew 12:6). Only God is greater than the temple. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). The unbelieving, Jews accused Him of blasphemy, but He actually was the Son of God—fully divine, and at the same time fully human. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

3. Unlike other men, Jesus is sinless (12:7). The thief on the cross testified, "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). The Father Himself testified audibly from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

4. Jesus understood perfectly the intent of the Law, and He worked within the spirit of the Law (Matthew 12:7, 11-12). Micah 6:8 sums up the spirit of the Old Testament Law: "He hath chewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Jesus taught what we know as the Golden Rule, concluding, "This is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). On the commandments to love God and our neighbor "ham, all the law and the prophets" (see Matthew 22:37-40).

5. Jesus' power to heal testified of His divine authority (Matthew 12:13). No other man had ever done or could do the miracles that He demonstrated in response to obedient, believing faith. His appeal to the doubters was, "Though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38).

Sovereign Over Satan

6. Devils were unable to withstand Jesus' authority (Matthew 12:22). They knew Jesus as their Creator (Colossians 1: 16). And they knew of the judgement that rested on them for leaving their first estate. On several occasions they begged not to be cast into their eternal doom before the appointed time. One time the disciples were unable to cast out a devil, but Jesus never had that problem. All angels, authorities, and powers are subject unto Him (1 Peter 3:22).

7. Jesus knew the thoughts of men (Matthew 12:25). No ordinary man has that power. But Jesus was divine, and He clearly understood the vain thoughts, ulterior motives, and false conclusions of His critics. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

Judge of Man's Hearts

8. Christ knows the condition of men's hearts (Matthew 12:34-35). He rightly assessed the Pharisees as a "generation of vipers," "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27). No man but Jesus can evaluate such matters accurately. "The heart is deceitful above all things,

and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). The answer to that question is Jesus, because He is divine.

9. Jesus asserted that till men will give account for their words in the Day of Judgment (Matthew 12:36-37). Idle words are never neutral. "Angry words! O let them never / From the tongue unbridled slip"! Words that leave our tongues can never be retracted. Remember proper words justify, but improper words condemn. Christ Himself will be the judge. He keeps a perfect record of all that we say. He will not call others into account for our words.

Important Teachings

1. Jesus answered His accusers with the authority of the Scriptures (Matthew 12:3-5).
2. Christ held the authority of God Himself (Matthew 12:6).
3. Unlike other men, Jesus is sinless (Matthew 12:7).
4. Jesus understood perfectly the intent of the Law, and He worked within the spirit of the Law (Matthew 12:7, 11-12).
5. Jesus' power to heal testified of His divine authority (Matthew 12:13).
6. Devils were unable to withstand Jesus' authority (Matthew 12:22).
7. Jesus knew the thoughts of men (Matthew 12:25).
8. Christ knows the condition of men's hearts (Matthew 12:34-35).
9. Jesus asserted that all men will give account for their words in the Day of Judgment (Matthew 12:36-37).
10. Christ came to establish the spiritual kingdom of God (Matthew 12:28).
11. Jesus' power over devils proves His prior defeat of Satan (Matthew 12:29).

Answers to Questions

1. What incidents did the Pharisees use to challenge Jesus' authority? How did Jesus respond?

One incident was when the disciples picked corn on the Sabbath Day. This action violated the Jewish Rabbinical laws but not the Scriptures. He clinched His lesson by saying, "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."

Another incident involved the man with a withered hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?" Jesus answered with examples that illustrated the proper concept of being helpful and

showing mercy to those in need.

Jesus showed them the fallacy of their reasoning. They readily would help an animal in need on the Sabbath Day, but they would not do good to a man. Jesus then healed the man upon his obedience to His command to "stretch forth thine hand." This deliberate act of healing was Jesus' response to the Pharisees deliberate intention to accuse Him (Matthew 12:10).

2. Who is "one greater than the temple" (12:6)? Who are "the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7)?

Jesus is greater than the temple. The guiltless were Jesus, the disciples, David, the priests in the temple, and the man with the withered hand.

3. Explain the meaning of "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

Micah 6:8 states plainly, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The Jews in Jesus' day were steeped in religious ritual while omitting the weightier matters of the Law—judgment, mercy, and faith. Jesus said, "These [things] ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone". To sacrifice (keep the letter of the Law) was important, but without mercy (the spirit of humility, love for God and fellow men, and proper judgment of others needs), it brought condemnation.

4. Who is the "strong man" (Matthew 12:29)? Satan is the strong man.

5. What principles from these verses show that Jesus is sovereign over Satan?

The devils were unable to withstand Jesus' authority (12:22). Jesus knows the thoughts of evil men under the devil's authority (Matthew 12:24-25). Jesus' power over devils proves His prior defeat of Satan (Matthew 12:29).

6. From Jesus' statements, list some unchangeable laws of cause and effect. The mouth speaks what is already in the heart (Matthew 12:34). A good man with a good treasure of heart brings forth good deeds, but an evil man with an evil treasure of heart brings forth evil deeds (Matthew 12:35). Words spoken either justify or condemn a person (Matthew 12:37).

7. How can words both justify and condemn?

Words are indicators of the heart's condition—good, feigned, or evil. Good words from a cleansed and sincere heart justify. God alone knows when one's words are feigned (sounding good while concealing rottenness). Such

words will condemn a person, just as do evil words from a defiled heart. God keeps a perfect record. No one will be justified or condemned for words spoken by another.

Summarizing the Lesson

Jesus' authority remains intact. Those who presumptuously resist it fail to reckon with His ability to keep a perfect account of every word and action. "Blind unbelief is sure to err, / And scan His work in vain: / God is His own interpreter, / And He will make it plain.-Those who believe that Jesus, as the Messiah, has come receive an understanding (1 John 5:20) that He is the "True God of true God, / Light of light eternal.

Research Guide

1. Study the parallel passages in Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-12.
2. Follow the progression of consistency from the Old Testament to the New that Jesus gives in helping believers to understand the spirit of the Law (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Micah 6:8; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 5:7; 9:13; 12:7; 19:19; 22:37-40; James 2:8, 12, 13, and so forth).
3. Read about the Sabbath in a Bible Dictionary. Alfred Edersheim gives vivid examples of Pharisaical add-ons to Sabbath observance in his book, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Appendix XVII).