



**MATTHEW 12:1-21
MESSIAH ON A MISSION
(PART 22)**

**“Jesus' Anti-Legalism
Approach To The Law”**

INTRODUCTION

At this point, the people of Israel greatly misunderstand Jesus, and the leaders, especially the Pharisees, often oppose him. Jesus spends time with and eats with all kinds of people, and they call him a glutton and a drunkard (11:19). Jesus is preaching the Kingdom of God and demonstrating power by healing all manner of diseases, and the witnesses to these mighty deeds will not repent (11:23). Jesus offers us a balanced and reasonable approach to God. The yoke is easy, and the burden is light (11:28-30). This teaching caused the people of the religious institutions to misunderstand His objective, and now the reader has a hostile conflict that will play out from Matthew 12:1-14:36.

WHAT IS THE CONFLICT ABOUT THAT ARISES BETWEEN JESUS AND THE PHARISEES?

Jesus' earlier altercations with Pharisees resulted from his eating with tax collectors and sinners (9:9–13). His healing authority (9:34). Now the conflict arises from his interpretation of Sabbath regulations (12:1–14) And the origins of his healing power (12:22–29). In subsequent chapters, Matthew will introduce oral traditions concerning the law as another point of conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus (15:1–20). In these debates, the emphasis is on how Jesus rightly interprets the Torah through the lens of mercy (9:13; 12:7), a motif that is closely linked with Jesus' works of healing (e.g., 9:34–38; 12:15–21).

Jesus Believed in the Authority of Scripture-- "Have ye not read...?" (Matthew 12:3)

Jesus asked this question on six occasions in Matthew and quoted Scripture as the authority:

1. Matthew 12:3 "what David did when he became hungry" (Leviticus 24:6-9; 1 Samuel 21:6)
2. Matthew 12:5 "that the priests break the Sabbath and are innocent?" (Numbers 28:9-10)
3. Matthew 19:4 "that He...made them male and female?" (Genesis 1:27)
4. Matthew 21:16 "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Psalm 8:2)
5. Matthew 21:42 "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone;(Psalm 118:22)
6. Matthew 22:31-32 "I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'?" (Exodus 3:6).

“Jesus is Greater than the Jewish Sanctuary” (12:3-4,6; 1 Sam. 21:4-6)

“The Priest Ahimelech did not hesitate to give the bread, having thought it better, remembering that the prophet says, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” In view of the danger of hunger, Ahimelech judged it better to help people than to offer sacrifice to God. The slain victim pleasing to God is the salvation of humankind. If David is holy and the priest Ahimelech is not offensive to you, but they have broken both commandments of the law with a probable excuse—in this case, hunger—why do you not find acceptable the same hunger in the apostles that you find acceptable in others?”
(Jerome)

Jesus is Greater Than The Jewish Sabbath (12:5-8)

“The Priests profane the Sabbath, every sabbath” (Numbers 28:9-10)

“For here the Giver of the law was overriding the law. This victory occurs in a particular place, the temple, and on a particular day, the sabbath. One might even point to several levels of legal reversal, pertaining to the work that is done; it is done by priests, and more so, that it elicits no charges. For they remain guiltless.

Do you see how many levels of argument Jesus is making in stating this case? They are “in the temple.” The persons involved are “priests.” The time is “the sabbath.” The act itself is “profane.” Note that he does not say gently that they “break” the sabbath law but more grievously that they “profane” it. Yet in all this they not only escape punishment but are free from blame, being “guiltless.” (Chrysostom)

The rabbis made the Sabbath a burden
instead of a blessing.

*“The Sabbath is given to you; you are not given to the Sabbath”
(Mekilta on Exodus 31:14)*

The Pharisees justified their movements but condemned anyone else who was moved by either their instincts or base needs. The Pharisees moved their mouths against Jesus but condemned the man who moved his withered hand toward Jesus. They conspired in their hearts to concoct a plot to kill Jesus (12:14), but when Jesus moved in compassion toward the man reaching for him by restoring his crippled limb, they thought that was unacceptable.





The Messiah's ministry will have four traits: (cf.12:15-21; Isaiah 42:1-4)

1. He will proclaim and bring justice to the earth (12:18, 20).
2. He will be quiet and humble, not a loud demagogue (12:19).
3. He will be gentle to the weak and the bruised (12:20).
4. The nations will hope to be saved through him (12:21).

For I desired mercy, and not
sacrifice; and the knowledge of
God more than burnt offerings.

Hosea 6:6

FOOTNOTES:

Laws Of the Ancient Hebrews

Such the legislation, and such the philosophy, of profane antiquity. The question of the skeptical lawyer returns upon us, "Where did Moses get his law?" -a law, as we see, incomparably superior to all that was produced by the civil and philosophic wisdom of the most enlightened ages and nations of the ancient world. Moses lived at a very period in the history of mankind, a period comparatively barbarous and unenlightened; yet has he given to the world a law, in which all the learning and sagacity of subsequent ages have not been able to detect a single flaw. Where did he get this law? Could he, by his own independent and unaided powers, soar so far above all his contemporaries and compeers, as to devise it himself? This cannot, with any show of reason or probability, be pretended. The source, then, whence it emanated, is open as the day. It came direct from the infinite intelligence, and is an undoubted seal of the divine mission of him, through whose agency it was enacted, and by whose pen it was published to the world.

Here I rest the argument for the supernatural illumination and guidance of Moses in the enactment of his code, so far as it depends upon the consideration of the moral principles embodied therein. It does not seem to me needful, for the purpose I have in view, to urge it beyond this point. The reader who would see it fully elucidated, may consult the second lecture of the second part of dean Graves's admirable on the Pentateuch.

FOOTNOTES (cont.):

There he will find the following positions firmly established, viz. that the law of Moses "enjoined love to God with the most unceasing solicitude, and love to our neighbor as extensively and forcibly as the peculiar design of the Jewish economy and the peculiar character of the Jewish people would permit; that it impressed the deepest conviction of God's requiring, not mere external observances, but heartfelt piety, well regulated desires, and active benevolence; that it taught sacrifice could not obtain pardon without repentance, or repentance without reformation and restitution; that it described circumcision itself, and by consequence every other legal rite, as designed to typify and inculcate internal holiness, which alone could render men acceptable to God; and that it represented the love of God as designed to act as a practical principle stimulating to the constant and sincere cultivation of purity, mercy, and truth." Certainly it is not a forced conclusion, which the learned author draws from these premises, that a moral system so perfect, and promulgated at so early a period, strongly bespeaks a divine original.

(Wines, E.C., Laws Of the Ancient Hebrews, 234, 235)

FOOTNOTES (cont.):

The Proof of the Gospel

And similar things, which he at once makes clear by interpretation, saying:

And he that arises to rule the Gentiles, on him shall the Gentiles trust."

Thus he has made it clear that the unreasoning animals, and not the wild beasts mentioned in the passage, represent the Gentiles, by reason of their being by nature like wild beasts; and he says that one arising from the seed of Jesse, from whom the genealogy of our Lord and Saviour runs, will rule over the Gentiles; on Him the nations that now believe in Him fix their hope, agreeably to the prediction, "And it shall be that he who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust." And the words " In him shall the Gentiles trust " are the same as " And he will be the expectation of the Gentiles." For there is no difference between saying ' 'In him shall the Gentiles trust" and " He shall be the expectation of the Gentiles." And the same Isaiah, continuing, prophesies these things about Christ:

" Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased, he shall bring judgment to the nations." (Isa. xlii.)

And he adds: " Till he place judgment upon the earth, and in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

FOOTNOTES (cont.):

Here, then, the second time the prophet states that the Gentiles will hope in Christ, having said above " In Him shall the Gentiles trust." Though here it is "In His name shall the Gentiles trust." And it was said also to David, that "of the fruit of thy body shall one be raised up," about Whom God says further on: "He shall call on me, Thou art my father; and I will make him my first-born". (Ps. cxxxii.) And about Him he says again, " And he shall rule from the one sea to the other, and from the rivers even unto the ends of the world." (Ps.lxxxviii.) And once more, " All the Gentiles shall serve him, and all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed in him." (Ps. lxxi.) And moreover, the definite place of His prophesied birth is foretold by Micah, saying: "And thou, Bethlehem, House of Ephratha, art the least that can be among the thousands of Judah. Out of thee shall come a leader, who shall feed my people Israel..." (Ps. lxxi.)

(Eusebius, The Proof of the Gospel, 111)