

This chapter contains a collection of lessons from Jesus on various topics. They are tied to His conflict with the Pharisees and lawyers in 11:37-54. After the meal broke up (11:37), Jesus left the house and the multitudes of 11:29 gather again.

Warning against Hypocrisy (12:1-3)

Having exposed the Pharisees and lawyers as hypocrites in 11:37-54, Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the “leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (12:1). A hypocrite pretends to be something he is not. Jesus said such people will be exposed (12:2). What is said in secret (such as their underhanded attempts to put Him to death) would be exposed, revealing their true character (12:3). Everything that the hypocrite seeks to hide will be exposed.

Whom to Fear (12:4-7)

Because His disciples, through fear of the Pharisees, might be tempted to play the hypocrite and deny Him before men, Jesus instructed them to fear God instead of man. Man can only destroy the body; God can destroy both the body and the soul (12:4-5). Consequently, one should fear God rather than man.

Furthermore, one should not fear men because of God’s providential care for His children. God watches over the sparrows and is even aware of the hairs on man’s head. Hence, He watches over His children and cares for them (12:6-7). God will protect His children from wicked men such as the Pharisees.

Confessing Christ (12:8-12)

Because of his fear of the Pharisees, one might be tempted not

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to confess Christ before men. Jesus promised to confess before the angels of God any man who confessed Him before men. Whoever is so cowardly that he denies Jesus before men will be denied by Jesus.

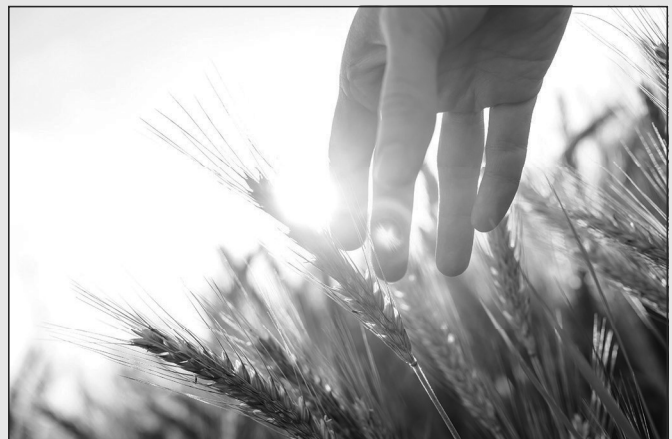
Anyone who blasphemes Jesus could be forgiven, provided he would repent and seek God’s forgiveness. However, whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven (12:10). This passage, which has been so often misunderstood, is not teaching that the Holy Spirit is a greater person than Jesus. Rather, it is pointing to the fact that should man reject Jesus there would be another effort made to save his soul by the revelation given by the Holy Spirit. However, should a man reject the revelation given

by the Holy Spirit, he would be forever lost because God would do nothing else to save man from sin. Some of those who blasphemed Jesus were converted on the day of Pentecost. However, those who reject the gospel reject God’s final offer of salvation; hence, they will never be forgiven.

In confessing Jesus, the apostles should not be anxious about what they would say or how they would say it. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach them what they ought to say at such as time (12:11-12; cf. Paul before Felix and Agrippa).

Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21)

One from Jesus’ audience asked Jesus to serve as an arbitrator in his conflict with his brother over an inheritance. Jesus refused to become



involved in such matters (12:14). Instead, He warned the man to beware of covetousness (12:15) saying, “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

To emphasize this truth, Jesus told a parable of a rich man whose farm gave a bountiful harvest. Instead of thinking of how his bounty could be used in the service of God, the man thought only of accumulating wealth to be spent on himself. Jesus reasoned with the man on the lowest level. He did not say, “What will become of your soul because of such conduct?” He did not say, “Have you responsibilities to the society?” He simply asked, “Whose shall these things be when you are dead?” The man who lays up treasures on earth, but is not rich toward God stands condemned (12:21).

God’s Providential Care (12:22-34)

Jesus taught His disciples to trust in God rather than becoming anxious about the accumulation of wealth. He reminded His disciples that life is more than what one eats or wears (12:22-23). He showed them that God takes care of the birds (12:24) and lilies (12:27). Furthermore, so many things about which men worry cannot be changed by worry (12:25-26). Hence, if God cares so much for the birds, lilies, and grass of the field, we can rest assured that He cares for us (12:28). God knows that we have physical needs. Consequently, man should not become so consumed in worrying about the affairs of this life that he is not rich toward God (12:29-30).

Jesus instructed His disciples to seek the kingdom of heaven first (12:31) and not become consumed by fear and anxiety. Rather than gathering into barns (12:18), Christians should sell what they have and

lay up treasure in heaven, trusting in God (12:33). “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (12:34).

Watchful Servants (12:35-48)

Jesus taught His disciples to watch for the Lord’s coming, being prepared for the second coming, through a series of parables.

1. *The parable of the master returning to his house from a wedding feast (12:36-38)*. Jesus compared His departure and second coming to a master leaving his slaves and going to a wedding. Those servants whom the master found watching would be rewarded by him (12:37).

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2. *The parable of the thief in the night (12:39-40)*. Jesus warned about the danger of not being prepared by the parable of the thief breaking in at night. If a man knew when the thief was coming, he would be prepared to keep him from stealing his goods. “Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (12:40).

Peter asked if these parables were intended for the apostles or all disciples (12:41). In response, Jesus gave another parable teaching every man to watch and be ready.

3. *Parable of the two stewards (12:42-48)*. The master left a steward in charge of his house. What

kind of steward would be blessed? “Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (12:43). The servant who reasons, “My lord is delaying his coming,” and misuses his stewardship will be surprised by the lord’s return and caught unprepared. He will be punished for his wickedness.

Those who know the Lord’s will and are unprepared will be beaten with many stripes (12:47) and those who did not know the Lord’s will and are unprepared will be beaten with few stripes (12:48). Man should use his time learning and doing the Lord’s will.

Jesus: The Cause of Division (12:49-53)

Jesus wished that His mission were completed (12:49). He would continue to endure pain until His baptism of suffering was over (12:50). Some did not understand the nature of His work. They supposed that He would only bring peace. However, His gospel will divide men from one another (12:52-53). Those who reject Christ will persecute His disciples.

Discerning the Times (12:54-57)

The disciples should be able to tell, from the words of the prophets and Jesus, that the time for the coming of the kingdom of heaven and the division it would bring were near. He chided men who were able to read the signs of the heavens regarding the weather but were unable to see that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Agreeing with an Adversary (12:58-59)

One should discern the times and prepare for them. Discerning the times and recognizing that the coming of the Lord’s kingdom was

near, the Jews should be making peace with God. A wise man will seek to make an agreement with his adversary before going to court, for

if one is cast into jail, he will not be released until the last penny is paid. In a similar way, these Jews should settle their accounts with God, their

adversary, lest they be cast into hell for eternal torment.

Questions

1. What was the spiritual disease infecting the Pharisees (12:1)? _____
2. Why was it called a “leaven” (12:1)? _____

3. What reason did Jesus give for not being guilty of hypocrisy (12:2-3)? _____

4. Why might the disciples be tempted to hypocrisy (12:4-9)? _____

5. Why should one not fear men (12:4-7)? _____

6. What did Jesus promise those who had courage to confess Him (12:8)? _____
7. What is the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (12:10)? _____

 - a. Is the reason blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, but blasphemy against Jesus will be forgiven, because the Spirit is greater than Jesus? _____
 - b. Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit an eternal sin? _____
8. Why were the apostles not to worry about what they said when on trial (12:11-12)? _____

9. Why did Jesus refuse to grant the request of 12:14? _____

10. What is covetousness? _____
11. What does “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” mean (12:15)? _____

12. Of what sin was the man in the parable of 12:16-20 guilty? _____
13. What basis did Jesus use to appeal to man not to live like the rich fool (12:20)? _____

14. Why was the man called “a fool” (12:20)? _____

15. What theme is taught in 12:22-30? _____
- a. What examples did Jesus use to teach this? _____
- b. Who is of “little faith” (12:28)? _____
- c. What kind of idea do the “nations” have toward God (12:30)? _____
16. What did Jesus teach in 12:31-34? _____
- _____
17. Contrast the man of 12:18-19 and Jesus’ command in 12:33. _____
18. What parables did Jesus use to teach men to watch for His second coming and what lessons are emphasized by each (12:35-48)?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
19. Explain 12:49. _____
20. What “baptism” is referred to in 12:50? _____
21. In what sense did Jesus send division on earth (12:51-53)? _____
22. What is taught in 12:54-57? _____
23. What lesson is taught in 12:58-59? Is it only speaking of getting along with another person? _____
- _____

Define These Terms

1. Hypocrisy: _____
2. Blasphemy: _____
3. Covetousness: _____

Overcoming Denominational Error

1. The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that man does not have an immortal soul. What does 12:4 teach about man’s soul? _____
- _____
2. The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that there is no eternal hell. What does 12:5 teach about hell? _____
- _____