

# Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 12

## Matthew 12-14

### Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

#### 1. Abstract of Keener, Matthew, Session 12, Matthew 12-14

**Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Craig Keener's lecture** analyzes Matthew chapters 12-14, focusing on Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees regarding Sabbath observance and the nature of God's kingdom. **Key themes** explored include the Pharisees' hypocrisy, Jesus' authority as the Son of Man and Lord of the Sabbath, and the significance of Jesus' parables. **The lecture also** examines the contrasting figures of Jesus and Herod Antipas, highlighting Jesus' compassion and Herod's cruelty. **Keener's interpretations** draw heavily on Jewish traditions and literature to illuminate the text's historical and cultural context. **Finally**, he discusses the meaning and interpretation of Jesus' parables, emphasizing their multiple layers of meaning and their importance for disciples.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Matthews, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Matthew).**



**Keener\_Matthew\_S  
ession 12.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Matthew 12-14:

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Matthew 12-14**

**Overall Theme:** This lecture focuses on the growing conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities (primarily the Pharisees), highlighting key differences in their understanding of the Law, the Sabbath, and the nature of God's Kingdom. The lecture also delves into the meaning of Jesus' parables, demonstrating their purpose in revealing and concealing truth, and emphasizes the costly nature of true discipleship. Finally, the lecture details the story of Herod Antipas and the death of John the Baptist.

#### **Key Ideas and Facts:**

##### **1. Sabbath Controversies and the Nature of Rest (Matthew 12:1-8)**

- The conflict arises over Jesus' disciples gleaning grain on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees considered work, despite the law allowing gleaning. Keener notes, "It was legal to glean in other people's fields. That was allowed for in the law...However, it wasn't legal to prepare meals on the Sabbath. That was against the law."
- Jesus defends his disciples by citing the example of David eating consecrated bread (normally for priests only), arguing that human need takes precedence in an emergency. He also cites the priests working in the temple on the Sabbath.
- Jesus emphasizes that "Mercy [is] versus sacrifice," quoting Hosea and other prophets who prioritize justice and obedience over mere ritual.
- Jesus declares himself "Lord of the Sabbath," implying his divinity, but the Pharisees could potentially construe "Son of Man" to mean humans in general are "Lord of the Sabbath" in an indirect sense, thus making it difficult for them to directly accuse him. Keener explains, "The Sabbath was made for human beings, not human beings for the Sabbath. So, the Son of Man, humans are Lord of the Sabbath in that indirect sense." However, Keener notes that Jesus typically uses "Son of Man" to reference his own divinity.

##### **1. Healing on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14)**

- Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, a point of contention with the Pharisees.

- Jesus' method of healing is noteworthy: He doesn't even pray or lay hands on the man, but rather commands the man to stretch out his hand. Keener emphasizes, "Stretching out your hand was not work."
- Jesus uses the example of helping animals out of pits on the Sabbath to highlight the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who prioritize animals over people in need.
- The Pharisees' desire to kill Jesus escalates at this point. They were known for leniency, and this reaction demonstrates their departure from their own principles.
- Keener states, "What we are on paper, what we are in principle is not always what we are in person."

#### 1. **Jesus' Messianic Identity and the Command to Silence (Matthew 12:15-21)**

- Jesus often instructs those he heals not to tell anyone, a theme prevalent in Mark's Gospel and now in Matthew. Keener notes, "To heal people, Jesus often said, don't tell. And we have that here in 12:16." This was likely done to restrain popularity and avoid moving too quickly to the cross.
- Matthew connects this command to the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 42, emphasizing Jesus' meekness and mission to reveal God's love rather than to trumpet himself.
- The quote from Isaiah includes that the "Gentiles...will trust in him" tying into the Gentile mission of Matthew.

#### 1. **Accusations of Sorcery and Blasphemy (Matthew 12:22-37)**

- The Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul, a charge of sorcery punishable by death.
- Jesus responds with three arguments: 1) Why would Satan cast out Satan?; 2) By whom do *their* sons cast out demons?; 3) Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit of God.
- Jesus warns the Pharisees about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, which Keener interprets as rejecting clear evidence of God's power and love, ultimately leading to an inability to repent, he says, "They get to the point where no matter what kind of evidence is offered, they reject it. Their hearts are that hard, their minds are that closed." Keener explains that this is a condition of the heart, not

just one single act of blasphemy, and it does not apply to a person who has repented.

- Jesus speaks of "binding the strong man" which Keener connects to resisting the devil during the temptation in Matthew 4.
- Jesus notes that on the day of judgement, every word will be brought into judgement.

#### 1. **The Sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-42)**

- Jesus' critics demand a sign but he replies with the sign of Jonah: three days in the earth (Jesus' death and resurrection).
- The Ninevites repented at Jonah's preaching, therefore they will rise up and condemn those who didn't.
- The Queen of Sheba will also condemn those who were privileged to know the message of Jesus but rejected him.

#### 1. **Jesus' Spiritual Family (Matthew 12:46-50)**

- Jesus' mother and brothers come to see him, but he prioritizes his spiritual family (his disciples) over his earthly family. Keener states, "Jesus says, my disciples are my spiritual family. That's the family that counts most."

#### 1. **Parables of the Kingdom (Matthew 13)**

- Matthew 13 contains a collection of parables about the nature of the Kingdom of God, emphasizing both its present, hidden reality and its future glory.
- **Nature of Parables:** Parables are described as analogies, and the Hebrew word, "mashal," could include stories, proverbs, riddles, and so on. Jesus' parables align with those of other Jewish sages, featuring similar storytelling and characters. Keener says, "The closest specific parallels that we have to Jesus' parables are those told by other Jewish sages."
- **Purpose of Parables:** Parables were originally sermon illustrations. Jesus used them to both reveal and conceal truth. Parables are to invite the listener into deeper understanding and discipleship.

- **Interpretation of Parables:** Keener highlights the importance of interpreting parables within their context and notes that they often have multiple points of contact with reality, not just one single meaning. He cites the rabbinic parable of the blind man and the lame man who steal apples.
  - **Parable of the Sower (13:1-23):** The different kinds of soil represent different responses to the message of the kingdom. The good soil represents disciples who truly receive and understand the word. Keener states that to be good ground, "We need to go beyond just hearing something once a week. We need to be disciples."
  - **Parable of the Weeds/Tares (13:24-30, 36-43):** This parable highlights that the kingdom is both present, but the righteous and wicked will coexist until the final judgement. Keener states, "God tolerates the wicked for the sake of the chosen, but he will distinguish someday between them."
  - **Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32):** Emphasizes the small, hidden beginning of the kingdom that will grow to be great. It is alluding to language from Ezekiel and Daniel about kingdoms.
  - **Parable of the Yeast (13:33):** Emphasizes the pervasiveness of the kingdom, which is hidden but will affect the whole world. Keener notes, "This yeast pervades the dough, but she hides it in the dough."
  - **Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price (13:44-46):** These parables demonstrate the costly nature of discipleship and the supreme value of the kingdom. Keener notes, "This treasure was worth everything, so he sold everything he had to get something that was worth so much more."
  - **Parable of the Fishing Net (13:47-50):** The final judgment will reveal those who are truly committed to the kingdom.
  - **New Scribes (13:51-53):** Those well versed in the law but who now also understand the good news of the kingdom are described as new scribes.
1. **Herod Antipas and the Death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14)**
    - Herod Antipas was the governor of Galilee.

- Antipas' affair and marriage to Herodias (his brother's wife) was politically problematic. Keener notes that Herodias refused to marry him if he had another wife, so he divorced his first wife.
- John the Baptist criticized Herod's marriage, which led to his imprisonment and eventually his execution, a more merciful execution than a crucifixion.
- Herod's birthday party and the subsequent beheading of John the Baptist, is a contrast to the feasts where Jesus was the host. Keener states, "Jesus is a good host. Herod Antipas is a rotten host."
- Herod's banquet is contrasted with the story of Esther, where Queen Vashti refused to undress for the guests, but Salome, Herodias' daughter, dances lewdly before the guests.
- Antipas is described as making an extravagant offer of half the kingdom out of drunken lust, something he does not have the authority to do.
- Keener notes that John is portrayed as a martyr, and Herod as a bad person.
- Antipas' later petition for kingship (and ultimate banishment as a result) is also covered here.

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Keener's lecture on Matthew 12-14 highlights the major tensions between Jesus and the religious leaders of his time. The lecture demonstrates how Jesus' actions and teachings challenge the legalistic interpretations of the Law and reveal the true nature of the Kingdom of God. The parables emphasize the hidden nature of the Kingdom, and also the high cost of discipleship, ultimately calling for a profound and complete devotion to Christ. Finally, the story of Herod Antipas serves as a stark contrast to Jesus' life and ministry.

## 4. Matthew Study Guide: Session 12, Matthew 12-14

### Matthew 12-14 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus' disciples for gleaning grain on the Sabbath?
2. How did Jesus use the example of David and the consecrated bread to defend his disciples?
3. What does Jesus mean when he declares, "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath?"
4. What is the significance of Jesus healing the man with the withered hand without using medicine or prayer?
5. How did the Pharisees' approach to the law differ in principle versus their actions toward Jesus?
6. Why did Jesus often instruct those he healed not to tell anyone?
7. What does it mean to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, according to the lecture?
8. What is the significance of the sign of Jonah that Jesus offers his critics?
9. According to the lecture, what are the characteristics of a parable?
10. How does the parable of the sower explain the different ways people receive Jesus' message?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples because they considered the act of husking and grinding grain to be a form of preparing a meal, which was forbidden on the Sabbath according to their tradition. They were not concerned about the gleaning but the preparation.
2. Jesus cited the example of David eating consecrated bread, which was normally reserved for priests, to illustrate that human need and mercy can take precedence over strict ritualistic laws. He argued for the spirit of the law, not just the letter.

3. By declaring himself Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus asserts his divine authority over the Sabbath, implying he is God. Additionally, he says the Sabbath is made for humans, not humans for the Sabbath.
4. The significance of the healing is that Jesus healed by simply commanding the man to stretch out his hand and by knowing the Father's will, thus he doesn't break the laws even of the stricter Pharisees, which emphasizes his divine power. It shows that the healing was not by any external actions but by his inherent authority.
5. The Pharisees, known for leniency and avoiding capital punishment, acted in contradiction to these principles by becoming enraged at Jesus' ministry despite the fact that Jesus had not broken even the stricter Shammaite laws. They were more concerned about their power and tradition than following the principle of leniency.
6. Jesus instructed people to remain quiet to avoid drawing too much attention before his time, partially to restrain popularity and partly because it fulfilled the prophecy of the quiet servant in Isaiah. This was also related to the idea of the Kingdom being a secret for some.
7. Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is not about a specific action, but rather a hardened state of heart where someone rejects the clearest evidence of the Holy Spirit's work and becomes incapable of repentance. It involves rejecting not just the message but also the evidence of the message.
8. The sign of Jonah is that Jesus will be dead for three days, like Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature for three days, before his resurrection, a parallel meant to represent his own death and resurrection. It also indicates that the Gentiles will rise and condemn those who reject Jesus just like the Ninevites repented at Jonah's preaching.
9. Parables are short, relatable stories, often with agricultural and royal court imagery. They are sermon illustrations used by rabbis and Jesus to communicate deep meaning. They often contain multiple points of contact with reality and are meant to both reveal and conceal the truth of the kingdom.



10. The parable of the sower depicts four types of people: those who immediately reject the word, those who receive it superficially but quickly lose faith, those who are distracted by worldly concerns, and those who receive the word and understand it, producing a good harvest. These represent varied responses to Jesus' message and the necessity of becoming a disciple.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matthew 12, focusing on their differing interpretations of the Sabbath and the law. How do these conflicts highlight the central themes of Jesus' ministry?
2. Discuss the concept of the "hidden kingdom" as presented in the parables in Matthew 13, explaining the significance of the mustard seed, the yeast, and the wheat and tares. How do these parables inform our understanding of the kingdom's nature?
3. Examine the different interpretations of the parables, particularly the parable of the sower and the parable of the weeds, as presented by Dr. Keener. What is the significance of multiple points of contact in parables?
4. Compare and contrast the characters of Herod Antipas and Jesus in Matthew 14, focusing on the feast and the imprisonment of John the Baptist. How does this juxtaposition reveal the nature of true leadership and kingdom values?
5. Drawing on examples from the material, analyze the recurring theme of acceptance versus rejection in Matthew chapters 12-14, and discuss its relevance to the present-day Christian faith.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Beelzebul:** A name for a demon, often considered the prince of demons. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul.

**Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit:** In the context of the lecture, it is a state of heart where someone rejects the clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's work, becoming incapable of repentance.

**Darnel/Tares:** Weeds that resemble wheat in their early stages of growth. In the parable, they represent the wicked that coexist with the righteous.

**Essenes:** A Jewish sect known for their strict asceticism, including forbidding help to animals in distress on the Sabbath.

**Hillelites:** A school of Pharisees known for their more lenient interpretations of the law.

**Mashal:** A Hebrew word that translates to parable, proverb, or riddle. It refers to a wide range of literary forms.

**Parable:** A short, relatable story used by rabbis and Jesus to illustrate spiritual or moral truths. They often have multiple points of contact with reality.

**Pharisees:** A Jewish sect known for their emphasis on the law, tradition, and leniency in practice. Though sometimes hypocritical, they made it difficult to execute people based on their interpretation of the law.

**Sadducees:** A Jewish sect known for their power, their control of the government, their lack of leniency and their rejection of the Oral Law.

**Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

**Shammaites:** A school of Pharisees known for their stricter interpretations of the law.

**Son of Man:** A term that can mean "human being" in Hebrew and Aramaic, but in the Gospels, it is also a title for Jesus, implying his divine authority.

**Tetrarch:** A Roman governor of a tetrarchy, a region divided into four parts. Herod Antipas held this title as the governor of Galilee.

## 5. FAQs on Keener, Matthew, Session 12, Matthew 12-14, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Matthew Chapters 12-14

1. **What was the primary conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees regarding the Sabbath?** The conflict centered on the interpretation of "rest" on the Sabbath. While the Pharisees permitted activities like gleaning grain (picking loose heads of grain from a field) for food, they prohibited preparing food on the Sabbath, such as removing husks from grain to eat. Jesus' disciples did this while following him. The Pharisees saw this as work, while Jesus argued that human need, like hunger, took precedence, citing the examples of David eating consecrated bread and priests working in the temple. He emphasized that the Sabbath was made for human beings, not the other way around, and that mercy should prevail over strict ritual observance.
2. **What does Jesus mean when he calls himself "Lord of the Sabbath?"** By calling himself "Lord of the Sabbath", Jesus was implicitly claiming divinity. As only God has authority over the Sabbath. However, "Son of Man" in Hebrew and Aramaic can mean human, so they could interpret this as meaning that humans are master of the Sabbath. Jesus was establishing his authority over religious laws and traditions. It also implies that his interpretation of the Sabbath was the correct one.
3. **Why did Jesus often tell people not to reveal that he had healed them?** Jesus told people not to publicize his healings for a few reasons. Firstly, to avoid overly large crowds, which could lead to a premature confrontation with the authorities. Matthew also shows that this fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah, where the messianic figure doesn't "cry out" or draw attention to himself, but acts with meekness and compassion. Furthermore, Jesus wished to reveal his identity gradually and allow time for people to fully understand the nature of his kingdom.

4. **What is "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," and why is it considered unforgivable?** Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, in the context of Matthew 12, is not simply speaking against God but rejecting the clear evidence of the Spirit's work through Jesus. It represents a hardening of the heart to the point of being incapable of repentance. The Pharisees, by attributing Jesus's spirit-powered actions to Satan, were not merely disagreeing with his message, but actively denying the most obvious evidence of his divine authority. This rejection makes repentance impossible, as their hearts have become impervious to the truth.
5. **What is the significance of the "sign of Jonah" that Jesus offers?** The "sign of Jonah" is a reference to Jesus' death and resurrection. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature for three days, Jesus would be dead for three days before his resurrection. Jesus states that this will be the only sign given to the Pharisees. Additionally, the repentance of the Ninevites in response to Jonah's preaching serves as a warning to those who refuse to believe in Jesus. The Gentiles will rise up to condemn those who reject Jesus even though they have had less exposure to the truth.
6. **What does Jesus mean when he says his true family are his disciples?** While family was an essential value in Jewish culture, Jesus emphasizes that his spiritual family—those who follow his teachings and do the will of God—are his true family. This doesn't imply that he rejected his earthly family, but rather that commitment to God's kingdom is a greater priority. This statement was controversial in the culture of the time.
7. **What is the main purpose of Jesus' parables, and what are the key aspects of their interpretation?** Jesus' parables served as sermon illustrations designed to reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven to those with ears to hear and to hide them from those who lacked faith. The true meaning is not always self-evident. Disciples (and those who wish to learn) can be "insiders" through listening, learning, and applying the lessons. Parables also often include multiple points of contact with reality, not just a single meaning. In other words, multiple aspects of the story can refer to spiritual truths.

8. **What can we learn from the contrast between Jesus' banquets and Herod Antipas' banquet?** The contrast highlights the fundamental differences between Jesus' kingdom and worldly power. Jesus, as a good host, provides for people's needs with miraculous feeding, emphasizing generosity, service, and spiritual nourishment. On the other hand, Herod's banquet is a scene of immorality, drunken excess, and injustice, leading to the execution of John the Baptist. This contrast illustrates the moral corruption often associated with worldly power and the stark difference between the kingdom of God and worldly kingdoms