

A black and white, upside-down photograph of a city skyline with various skyscrapers and buildings. The image is mirrored vertically, creating a symmetrical effect.

# MATTHEW

The Upside down Kingdom

Matthew 12

Jesus didn't fit the religious leaders' expectations for the Messiah



## Matthew 12:1-8

**The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

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## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- The Pharisees started openly criticizing Jesus in earlier chapters: chastising Him for eating with sinners and tax collectors (9:11), then claiming He cast out demons not with the power of God (9:34).
- The fact that they were in a grain field on the Sabbath to see the disciples picking grain shows they were following Him and trying to figure out how to trap or test Him.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- They weren't working. They hadn't "taken a sickle to" the grain.
- They were just picking enough for them to eat in the moment.
- But Jesus didn't simply say that.
- He used a different, more theological argument, to say something even more intense.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- He compared His disciples to David's eating the Bread of the Presence in the tabernacle and priests who work on the Sabbath.
- The story of David's eating the bread is found in 1 Samuel 21:1–10, just after David ran away from Saul's palace because Jonathan warned him that Saul wanted to kill him.
- The priest at Nob didn't know David was running away.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- He also asked the priest for some kind of weapon.
- The priest gave him the only weapon he had, the sword David had used to cut off Goliath's head, which had been kept in the tabernacle for years (verses 7–10).
- This was how the Lord provided David with food and a weapon when he was on the run from Saul.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- This shows a contrast in belief between Jesus and the Pharisees about how to interpret Scripture.
- The Pharisees were “letter of the law” types, passionate about following every law to the absolute best of their ability, to the point of adding hundreds of their own stipulations to God’s law in order to clarify exactly what actions broke or did not break God’s law.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- Jesus interpreted the law more freely than the Pharisees in this way, and yet His standards were actually higher than those of the Pharisees because His concern was the condition of our hearts.
- The Pharisees followed the letter of the law and Jesus focused on the spirit of the law, arguing that you could follow the law perfectly, to the tiniest letter, and completely miss the spirit.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- What is the purpose of the Sabbath? To take a break from your regular work to focus on God.
- The disciples were doing that, not just in that moment, but with their whole lives – leaving their nets (their regular work) to follow Jesus (who was God).



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- Jesus compared them to priests, whose work on the Sabbath wasn't considered profaning the Sabbath, much like pastors who have to work on the Sabbath today.
- The priests and Levites were set apart from the "regular work" category to do the holy work of the temple.



## **The Pharisees didn't understand who Jesus really was**

- In the same way, Jesus' disciples were set apart to do His holy work, which Jesus called "something greater than the temple."
- In this way, along with calling Himself the "Lord of the Sabbath," it is clear that Jesus again claimed to not just be a prophet or rabbi but God Himself.



## **Matthew 12:9-14**

**It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath**

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## **It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath**

- Jesus continued His argument about the Sabbath by healing someone on the Sabbath, in their synagogue.
- Jesus could have waited a day to heal the man.
- The Pharisees asked Jesus about the Sabbath in order to trap Him.
- God wouldn't heal this man through Jesus if God disapproved of His Sabbath practices.





## It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath

- Jesus used another rhetorical argument device – “of how much more” in His answer to the Pharisees. They agreed that if your sheep fell into a pit on the Sabbath, it was OK to rescue it.
- Shepherds often dug pits as traps for wolves that might try to attack their flocks. It was relatively common to have to rescue their sheep from such a pit.



## **It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath**

- Most people responded to Jesus' miracles with joy, excitement and belief.
- His miracles made them much more likely to believe what He said because they proved He was from God.
- But His miracles didn't change the minds of the Pharisees.



## **It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath**

- Jesus' miracles served only to make Him more of a threat, because they caused Him to grow in popularity and power.
- Differences in biblical interpretation didn't usually make religious leaders want to have a rabbi killed.
- This went much deeper than a difference in theology. Jesus was a threat to their social, political and religious power.



## **It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath**

- The Pharisees were religious leaders, but they didn't have as much political power as the Sadducees, who were aristocrats.
- Matthew proceeds to tell the story of the Pharisees who continued to plot against Jesus, trying to trap, trick, and discredit Him until He finally is killed.



## **Matthew 12:15-21**

**Jesus would not fight back, but would bring justice to victory**

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## **Jesus would not fight back, but would bring justice to victory**

- Pharisees wanted to get Jesus, but He still had more to do. It wasn't His time yet, so He withdrew from that place.
- When He healed others, He told them not to tell people about it.
- He tried to stay discreet, but His fame grew far and wide through word of mouth anyway.



## **Jesus would not fight back, but would bring justice to victory**

- Matthew wrote that Jesus' discretion fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, that Messiah would "not quarrel or cry aloud."
- He did not come to fight with them or any other religious leaders.
- The passage says He knew they were plotting to kill Him, but He didn't seek to fight back. He simply "withdrew from there."



## **Jesus would not fight back, but would bring justice to victory**

- This prophecy from Isaiah leaves no doubt who Jesus is.
- He is God's servant, His beloved "with whom my soul is well-pleased" (the same language God used at His baptism).
- God's Spirit was upon Him through His healing, but Matthew now says that this is the Messiah. God's Spirit is upon Him.

# What does the Bible say about Santa Claus? How to turn holidays into Holy Days

By Dr. Jim Denison ▼



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# Santa Claus

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- There actually was a man known as Nicholas who was born in AD 280 in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey.
- He was bishop of the church in Myra, participated in the First Council of Nicaea, and helped the church find the best language to describe the Incarnation of Jesus.
- His love for children led him to visit their homes at night disguised in a red-and-white hooded robe to leave gifts of money, clothing, and food in their windows or around their fireplaces.

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# Santa Claus

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- The Dutch especially appreciated his life. They spelled his name *Sint Nikolass*, which, in America, became Sinterklass, or Santa Claus.
- His popularity grew through a poem written by Dr. Clement Clark Moore, a theology and classics professor at Union Seminary in New York.
- In 1822, he penned the classic, “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” better known today as “The Night Before Christmas.”
- Artist Thomas Nast illustrated the book, creating the figure we now know as the jolly Santa Claus.

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# Why December 25?

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- For many years, the Romans had celebrated the “birthday” of the sun each year on December 25 since that date is near the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere. It’s the beginning of the winter season.
- Pagan festivals marked the occasion for centuries before Christians began using the “birthday” of the sun as the birthday of the Son.
- By 1038, the Mass of Christ was called Cristes Maesse, from which we get the word “Christmas.”
- In 1223, St. Francis of Assisi assembled the first nativity scene.

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# Where was Jesus born?

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- Bethlehem's location on this well-traveled route made it the perfect location for an inn, which was built near a cave.
- The cave was used as a stable for the innkeeper's animals.
- Our modern-day nativity scenes depict Jesus and his family and worshippers surrounded by beauty and serenity.
- If you have been in a cave, you know there's no light except the fire one lights inside, and then the smoke stings the eyes and fills the lungs. There's no air circulation, so it feels damp and musty.

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# Where was Jesus born?

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- Animals were stabled here. Imagine the odors of a barn.
- This was the scene where Jesus was born. He was placed in a stone feed trough chiseled out of a rocky platform, two feet off the ground.
- The Lord of the universe was placed where donkeys, mules, and sheep had been licking up barley and oats.
- Don't see this as mistreatment or a lack of compassion. The innkeeper offered what he had on a busy night during the census when every room in the inn was full.

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# Christ Before Christmas

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- Descended from the line of Abraham (Genesis 12:2), Jacob (Numbers 24:17), Judah (Genesis 49:10), Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), and David (2 Samuel 7:12)
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- Eventually rejected by his own people (Isaiah 53:3)
- Sold for thirty shekels (Zechariah 11:12)
- Forsaken by his disciples (Zechariah 13:7)
- Silent before his accusers (Isaiah 53:7)

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# Christ Before Christmas

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- At his death, his hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16).
- He would be crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12).
- No bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20).
- The soldiers would gamble for his clothes (Psalm 22:18).
- He would suffer thirst (Psalm 69:21).
- He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9).
- He would be resurrected (Psalm 16:10).

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# Mary and Joseph

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- Micah 5:2 announced the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. But Mary lived in Nazareth, some eighty miles away.
- Mary was likely twelve or thirteen years old when the angel Gabriel visited her with the news that she would become the mother of the Messiah.
- Joseph was a carpenter from Nazareth who was betrothed to Mary when she became pregnant with the Messiah.
- He was descended from King David and is the only man in the New Testament besides Jesus to be called the “son of David” (Matthew 1:20).

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# Wise Men

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- Our nativity scenes have three wise men since they brought three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But the magi usually traveled in groups of twelve or more for safety.
- As Matthew recorded, the magi, or wise men, came from the east, likely Persia, which is Iran today.
- It is believed that invading Persians spared the Church of the Nativity in AD 614 because they saw a golden mosaic over the doorway which depicted the magi in Persian headdress and clothing.

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# Light a Candle

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- One of the earliest Christmas traditions was lighting candles to symbolize this coming of the Light of God. Believers often still light candles in their places of worship and put them on their window sills at home.
- Wherever they were lit, they brought the light of Jesus into a dark room.
- In the medieval world, the tradition grew. Fathers told their children that the Christ Child returns to earth each Christmas Eve, hoping to find a home and heart open to him. They placed candles in their windows to tell Jesus that he was welcome in their home.

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# Christmas Tree

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- Martin Luther, was walking in a forest toward his home one clear evening. He looked around and was struck by the beauty of the stars shining through the trees.
- Determined that his family would share this beauty with him, he decided to cut down a small tree and bring it home. He hung candles on its branches, signifying the stars twinkling through the tree's branches.
- The tree reminds us of the beauty of the world Jesus brought into being. And it also foreshadows the tree of Calvary upon which he died for us.

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# Poinsettia

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- Joel Poinsett was a member of President Van Buren's cabinet and minister to Mexico.
- While traveling in the Mexican countryside, he was attracted to a beautiful plant he found growing there.
- Upon his return to South Carolina, he brought the plant with him and began growing it. It is named for him today.
- The beautiful red leaves of the poinsettia plant, remind us of the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross for us all.

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