

The Divided Kingdom

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[0 : 00] All right, well, we are continuing on with our series this morning, Stories of the Kingdom, looking at the parables of Jesus. So if you will take the Word of God with me and turn to the book of Matthew.

Matthew's Gospel. Of course, Matthew was a tax collector who Jesus found and redeemed, and he became a devout follower of Jesus and gave us that first gospel from which we learned so much about the Savior. So we are looking at Matthew chapter 12.

We've been in chapter 13 for the first couple of segments of this series, but today we're moving back a chapter to chapter 12. We're going to pick it up in verse 22 of Matthew 12.

Matthew chapter 12 in verse 22. This morning, we're going to be talking about the subject, the divided kingdom.

The divided kingdom from Matthew 12 verse 22. We're going to read down through verse 30. All right, let's begin. I'm reading from the Christian Standard Bible.

[1 : 16] Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to him, meaning Jesus. Jesus healed him so that the man could both speak and see.

All the crowds were astounded and said, could this be the son of David? And I'll pause for a moment here. They mean, could this be the Messiah?

Could this be the promised king who would come and deliver them, give them victory over their captors, be their king that they had awaited for so long?

Verse 24. When the Pharisees heard this, they said, this man drives out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus tells them, every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction. And no city or house divided against itself will stand.

[2 : 15] If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason, they will be your judges. Verse 28. If I drive out demons by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

How can someone enter a strong man's house, watch this, and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?

Then he can plunder his house. Anyone who is not with me is against me. And anyone who does not gather with me scatters.

Let's pray right now and ask God to give us illumination, shine his light on the truth behind these scriptures this morning. God, I pray right now that you would do just that.

[3 : 20] That by your spirit, by your power, by your wisdom, your divine revelation, you would allow us to have clear minds, distraction-free focus on what your word is teaching us this morning.

And we'll give you all the glory for it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So we are looking at this passage specifically. And first of all, we're not going to dwell on the first part of it.

There's an incredible miracle here. Jesus heals someone who was possessed by demons. That in and of itself is nothing that you and I could do apart from the power of God.

And so we see this incredible miracle. And we see the Pharisees responding to it. Not how you and I would respond.

If we saw someone casting out demons out of someone, we would think, wow, that person must have God's power on them. Of course, the Pharisees are going to twist what just happened.

[4 : 22] Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. They were very much opposed to Jesus and his teachings. Because, of course, he came from the one true God. And they were holding on to their man-made religious system that was not compatible with the true gospel of God.

And so they're opposing him at every step. And so they said, yeah, he only casts out demons because he has the power of Satan to do so.

So Jesus is making the point here that, no, no, no, that doesn't make any sense. That doesn't hold up under examination. You can't just say, I'm doing this by the power of Satan.

That doesn't make sense that Satan would be working against himself. Maybe I would be possessing people with demons, but I wouldn't be casting them out, right?

So he's making this obvious point. But let's dig a little deeper this morning. I want to make something clear to you all. God's word is precise.

[5 : 26] There may be many applications to a given passage of scripture. But there is only one true interpretation. So the one true interpretation of this scripture is what we just talked about.

How Jesus is making this obvious point to the Pharisees when they're making this illogical accusation after the miracle he just did. And he's saying, no, I'm clearly sent from God.

I clearly am using God's power, not working through Satan. So this kind of thing may have happened multiple times through Jesus' ministry. We don't know.

We could only have recorded what the scriptures teach us. But why then is this included in our scriptures for our benefit?

I think we can look at this and say, yeah, we know that Jesus wasn't sent from Satan. So why would he include this for us? I think part of the reason is so we can draw some applications.

[6 : 30] After understanding what the interpretation of this passage is, we can draw some applications that will help us here in 2025 in Henrietta, Texas, in Clay County, in our corner of the world.

How can this passage apply to us? Well, let's look at some of those applications this morning.

Number one, bind the strong man.

Bind the strong man. Down here in verse 29. How can someone enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?

So if anyone is accused of breaking and entering after this, that's not on me. All right? It's in the book. Just reading it to you. Don't go break into anybody's house and tie them up and clean them out.

All right? But what we can understand from this is the very obvious principle that Jesus is saying you can't go in and conquer an enemy, a strong enemy, unless you first take care of that enemy.

[7 : 38] You've got to tie them up. You've got to conquer them. You can't just go take what they own and enjoy the spoils of your victory without first conquering that enemy.

So we have an application that we can take from this that says we must bind the strong man. I want to draw your attention to 1 John chapter 4 and verse 4.

The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. How many of y'all would agree with that statement? Amen. The one who is in you, if you are in Christ and Christ is in you, he is greater than any force that you could come up against in this world.

I can promise you that. And I can also promise you that there are some powerful forces that you could come up against in this world. Jesus Christ holds all the power.

He holds the key to life and death. He holds the key to death and hell. He said so. He was there at creation. He's been there at every step of God's work in this world.

[8 : 52] And he says, all power is given to me. But do you understand that God also allows Satan a certain amount of power?

He allows Satan power over darkness. And while he also holds ultimate power over darkness, Satan is allowed to work until his time is up.

And I can also tell you this, Satan, maybe in this instance we can call him the strong man, is more powerful than you or I am.

Apart from the power of God, you and I pale in comparison to the power of sin and darkness. We can't defeat it. We'll come up against it and we'll lose every time.

But with God's power, we have nothing to fear. With God's power, we can bind the strong man. We will see his strength displayed in our lives in a lot of different ways.

[9 : 58] First off, you might see past hurts. But do you see what these are? Anybody know what those are? There are buttons. Yes, they are. Do you know what kind of buttons?

They're detonators. That's right. You push those and something's going to go boom. These are dangerous traps. You've got past hurts.

You've got pride. You've got anger. You've got guilt. And you've got shame. Every one of us is prone to these. Every one of us could be swayed by these.

We could easily fall into these traps. So what is it that we can do about this? How can we bind the strong man and conquer these traps?

We have to remember, first of all, that the one in us is greater than the one who set these traps. The one in us has the way to diffuse these traps.

[11:01] Past hurts. You might be held up with someone who hurt you or something that happened in your life and you just can't seem to move on. Maybe it's something that you did to someone else.

And that's maybe tied in with that guilt and shame. But past hurts can derail us. They can be a strong man that can, instead of tying him up, it can tie us up.

And we'll never experience the blessings, the joy, the freedom, the victory that God has planned for us. Because we're so consumed with past hurts.

Pride. Pride is a big one, isn't it? Pride. Sometimes we can't go to someone else and admit any wrongdoing because of our pride. Sometimes our pride makes us obtuse.

Sometimes it makes us hard-headed. Sometimes it makes us stubborn. We never get to humble ourselves before God. Bow down before him.

[12:04] Sometimes both physically and mentally. And say, God, I submit to you. But we can't do that because of pride. And that strong man has a strong bond over us.

And we can't conquer him. Anger. Anger is a big one, isn't it? Sometimes we love to see, look at Jesus. The kind of one time we see him really get angry in the New Testament.

And we see him throwing the tables over and casting the crooked dealers out of the temple that God had set up for worship of him. And we see his righteous indignation or righteous anger.

And we say, yeah, that's it, man. Jesus got angry. I can get angry, too. My temper is not a problem. And those around you, those who love you and know you best, know that it absolutely is.

Sometimes it's external. And everybody knows when you're mad. Everybody knows when you're not okay. And you're going to make sure everybody knows about it. Or sometimes it's internal. And you might not be an exterior expresser.

[13:11] You might not wear all your feelings out there for everybody to see. But you internalize everything. And that anger inside is eating at you. And you'll never forgive. And you'll never move on.

And it's going to be a cancer that takes you to your grave. But God wants you to bind that strong man. And experience the blessings.

The victory, the joy in letting go. In giving it to him. In casting your burdens on him. Understanding that you get to share a little bit of what Jesus endured.

With all the injustice. All the wrong that was done to him. That he had done nothing to deserve. We really don't hold any chance of saying what we have endured pales.

In comparison with what Jesus has endured. We can't hold up to that. We know that he suffered so much more greatly than we ever will. So our anger is never justified.

[14:22] And we must bind that strong man. And the last one is guilt and shame. Every one of us is carrying guilt. Every one of us is carrying shame. And Jesus wants to deliver you from that.

Jesus wants to deliver you from the guilt and the shame. Now God can use those as tools in your life. When we stray away from him. When we start to go our own way.

Our conscience and the promptings of the Holy Spirit inside of us. Can draw us back and say no. That's not what God had designed for you. That's not the path he has for you.

You've strayed away. You're going off into things and you're hurting yourself. And you're possibly even hurting others. Come back to the narrow path that Jesus had you on. But God never wants you to hold on to your guilt and shame.

Why? Because you don't understand how he looks at you. If you're holding on to your guilt and shame. You don't understand that God looks at you as his perfect, righteous, forgiven child.

[15:28] Now you are not perfect. By yourself you are not righteous. Any more than I am. But every one of us. If we have placed our faith in Jesus and Jesus alone.

For the forgiveness of our sins. His death. His resurrection. Then we can be forgiven. And we can be seen as his righteous, clean, holy children.

That's an incredible thing. That you and I didn't deserve. You and I did nothing to earn it. But Jesus just freely gave it.

So any guilt and shame are actually traps that the devil could use to undermine your faith in God.

When you start believing that how you see yourself is more true than what God says you are.

Then you're believing yourself and Satan's lies over God's promises and truth. Jesus said, I am the way.

[16:37] I am the truth. I am the life. There is no other life apart from him. There's no other truth apart from him. So anything that is not what Jesus told us in his scriptures.

That's not truth. That's a lie. Don't fall into the devil's trap of guilt and shame. These are strong men. And we have the power to bind them.

We have the power to not fall into these traps. Because the one in us as children of God. I'm not assuming everyone in this room has made that momentous, that huge decision by faith to put all of your belief in Jesus.

For the forgiveness of your sins. But if you have. And you'll know if you have. I'm not talking about going to church. I'm not talking about being a good person. I'm talking about that once in a lifetime decision to say, God, I can't do it.

I believe in you. Save me. Forgive me. Cleanse me. Make me your child. If that has happened for you, then Jesus says you are one of his.

[17:46] You are a child of God. And you have him, his spirit in you. And the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

So, bind the strong man. That's an application we can take from Jesus' teaching here. Secondly, are you with me or against me? You're either with me or against me.

There's no middle ground here. Look back at verse 30. The first part. Anyone who is not with me is against me. Boy, that's tough, isn't it?

There's no gray area. Now, I will promise you, there is a lot of gray in scripture. People who try to make scripture all black and white. And say it either tells you exactly what to do or exactly what not to do.

That's not true. There are certain areas where it does. There are certain areas that are absolutely clear and plain. And how we should obey Christ. How we should love our lives. How we come to faith in him.

[18:51] There are certain things that are absolutely black and white. There are other areas that I think are intentionally left gray. Because we are supposed to follow the discernment. The leading of the Holy Spirit.

And then he will individually deal with us. In our lives. So somebody might come to you and say.

Well, I'm pretty sure the Bible says that. You shouldn't go watch movies in the movie theater.

That's. One of the rules I had growing up. And the Bible doesn't actually say that. So there's some gray area there. There are probably certain movies that.

Any child of God should not go watch in the movie theater. Right? They very clearly go against the morals and teaching of the scriptures. But we can't just make blanket statements where the Bible doesn't make one.

Well, here. He makes a very clear statement. He says you're either with me. Or against me. And anyone who is not with me. Is against me.

[19:53] That's pretty exclusive, isn't it? He's drawing a hard line in the sand. He's kind of making a lot of enemies there. Saying if you're not actively with me.

Then you're actually against me. Whether or not you even realize it. I want to draw your attention to Joshua 24 and verse 15. Choose you this day whom you will serve.

But as for me and my house. We will serve the Lord. Joshua was commanding the people of God. The Israelite people. And saying listen. You have to make a choice.

This is a moment. I'm drawing a line in the sand. Anybody remember Texas history? Drawing the line in the sand. So anybody who's going to stay here. Come on over. And they did.

This is the big moment. This is the moment that you choose. Whom you're going to serve. Is it going to be you?

[20:54] Or is it going to be God? Because I promise you. Those are going to lead different directions. Choosing to serve yourself. Will lead you to a different destination.

Than choosing to serve God. You can decide which destination. You want to arrive at. You can decide what you want to experience along the way.

God's blessings. Or whatever you can get for yourself. God's protection. Or hanging yourself out to dry. In the storms of life. But you have to choose.

Because if you're not with him. You're against him. If you're not with him. You're against him. What does it look like. To be with Jesus.

We're going to dive into it. Just a little bit more. In just a moment. But maybe it looks like. Making sure you don't miss. The gathering of the believers.

[21 : 57] Maybe it looks like. Making sure you don't. Go day after day after day. Without cracking open. The word of God. And reading what it has to say. Maybe.

Maybe. It looks like. Making a decision. Based on what you believe. God. Has taught you. From the word. And not just what sounds best.

To you. Maybe it's changing. Your moral compass. Maybe living this way. Isn't okay anymore. Because you're not.

Living for yourself. You're choosing. To follow. Someone else. Maybe those. Innocent flirtations. Are not acceptable anymore. Because you're not setting. The rules for yourself.

You're following God's rules. Maybe that sketchy. Business dealing. That you think. You can get away with. Isn't okay anymore. Because you're not serving yourself.

[22 : 53] You're serving someone else. You have a different master. Whatever it is. However it looks. However it applies to you. I can't begin to guess. What's going on in your. Heart.

And in your life. But I do know. That it looks different. When you have a master. Are you going to be. Your own master. Or are you going to say.

I choose. To serve. The Lord. Me. And my house. We will serve the Lord. Because. I want to be with him. I don't want to be against him. I don't want to take on God.

And I think. When we understand. That Jesus is saying. If you are not. Following me. Then you're working. Against me. Boy. If I had told you that. On your way in the door.

This morning. Hey good morning. Great to see you at church. By the way. If you're not following Jesus. You're working against him. Everybody would have looked at me. Like what? Good night man. But that is literally.

[23 : 49] What he's teaching us here. And he goes on. To teach us a little bit. More about it. When he says. At the end of verse 30. Anyone who does not gather with me. Scatters.

What does he mean by that? Well that's our third point this morning. You're either gathering. Or you're scattering. I think this is a reference. Back to Ecclesiastes. Back to Ecclesiastes.

In the Old Testament. Wow. We just jumped ahead. There we go. Ecclesiastes chapter 3. In verse 5. A time to scatter stones. And a time to gather them.

The prophet was teaching. He said. There is a time for everything on this earth. There is a time to scatter stones. And a time to gather them. What's he talking about? That's a very obscure reference.

Well I had to kind of dig deep. Into historians. And theologians. And archaeologists. And all this. And preparation for this. And I kind of gathered some facts. Gathered.

[24 : 44] Thank you. Just checking if you're with me here. These are scattering stones. This is an example of scattering stones. What would scattering stones be used for in ancient times?

Anybody want to venture a guess? Scattering. I like it. What's that? Traveling? No. War? Like catapults?

Launching as a means of tearing something down. These. These. Probably not. Super. Interesting here.

But. These were used as. Weapons. Ammunition. They'd be put into catapults. And hurled at walls. To eventually knock them down. In war.

Scattering stones are meant to break down. They're meant to tear down. To break things apart. On the other hand. You've got gathering stones. And what would gathering stones be used for?

[25 : 41] Buildings. Yeah. Be used to build something up. Completely different. You see how they look. Very different. Than these. So I think Jesus is making a reference here.

To something that they would understand. You're either. A scattering stone. Or a gathering stone. What are you?

Not asking what you want to be. Or how you like to think of yourself. But in the kingdom of God. Remember this whole thing. Is called stories of the kingdom. God is revealing. Little by little. What his kingdom looks like. Because it looks very different. Than the kingdom of this world. The kingdom of this world. Everybody's in it for themselves. Everybody's trying to get what's best for them.

Everybody's trying to do. What they think will make them happy. Give them pleasure. But in God's kingdom. It looks very different. And he says. You either function.

[26 : 44] As a scattering stone. To break things apart. To tear things down. Or you are a gathering stone. To build things up. And how does he put it? He puts it way better than I could.

Anyone who is not with me. Is against me. And anyone who does not gather with me. Scatters. Y'all I didn't say this.

Jesus did. If you aren't gathering with Jesus. Then you're scattering. If you aren't building up. God's kingdom. With Jesus. Then you're scattering. Or tearing down. His kingdom. If you're not actively.

Gathering people. Into his church. Building up his body. He calls the church his body. He calls the church his bride. The church is preeminent.

[27 : 44] On this earth. For him. It is who he loves. He cherishes. He prizes. It's who he died for. And if you're not actively gathering.

Into his church. Then you're scattering. I don't want to be a scatterer. I want to be a gatherer. So. It might be time. For us to decide. What we're going to be. Are we with him? Or are we against him?

Are we gathering? Or are we scattering? Exodus chapter 32. This is one of those moments. This is one of those. Draw your saber in the sand.

And say. Which side are you going to be on? Moses stood in the gate of the camp. This was right after. That they built that golden calf.

[28 : 46] And they were worshiping it. Instead of the one true God. He had just delivered them. And before you know it. They're telling Aaron. Moses' assistant.

To say. Build us a new God. Build us a new God. You ever cheated on God like that? God's been good to you in your life?

I can promise you I have. There's been times when God's brought me through. All kinds of wonderful things. Incredible things. God moments that only he could do. And then before I know it. I'm turning around. And I'm ignoring him. I'm turning around. And I'm pursuing something else. I'm turning around. And I'm giving something else. The place in my heart. In my life. That God alone should have.

So we see the Israelite people. His chosen people doing that. They're saying. Man. Yeah. We know. Yeah. God's great and all that. But he's not doing anything for us right now. Aaron. Build us a new God. Make it pretty.

[29 : 43] Make it something we can look at. So he builds this golden calf. And then Moses stands before the people. And he says. Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me.

You're going to have to decide. We're not going to get into the rest of the story. But. Nothing good happened to the ones who were not on the Lord's side that day.

Exodus 32. Gives us a moment. Again. There's one interpretation of that passage. But there's many applications. And one of the application that we can take.

Is. Are we on the Lord's side? Are we truly on the Lord's side? Or have we seen him work in our life? But we have not been faithful. To him.

Great president Abraham Lincoln said. I know that the Lord is always on the side of right. But it's my constant anxiety and prayer. That I and this nation.

[30 : 45] Should be on. The Lord's side. He wasn't a perfect man. He wasn't a perfect president. But I believe we saw his heart. That America would be on the Lord's side.

That should be the heart. Of our church. That should be the heart of our homes. That should be our hearts. It's my constant anxiety. And prayer.

I'm anxious about it. And I'm faithful to pray about it. That we. That me and my house. We will serve the Lord. That I will cross the line. I will step over that line of the sand.

And I will be on the Lord's side. I'm going to be a gatherer. Not a scatterer. I'm going to be with him. Not against him. The strong man will fight against that.

You'll have moments where it's challenged. You choose to be on the Lord's side. Do you know what you're also choosing? Increased attacks from Satan.

[31 : 50] You choose to be a gatherer. Not a scatterer. You know what you're choosing? Satan to try to knock down what you're building up through God's power. But I can promise you.

For every time he knocks something down in your life. God has the power and the good will. To bless you. To heal you.

To lift you up. To lead you to places that you can't go on your own. I'm not promising you're going to get rich. I'm not promising all the problems with you physically are going to get fixed.

I'm not promising any tangible thing other than God will be with you. And that's enough. Those of you who have walked with him know it's enough.

And if you're wondering this morning, if you're questioning it. Then I'll just say you haven't yet tasted enough of him. You haven't yet walked with him long enough.

[32 : 47] Because in every moment that we question. In every moment that we doubt. He comes through. He shows himself real again. And again.

Stay on his side. Church, we're facing a line in the sand. We are facing a moment as a church. Whose side are we going to be on? Let me break it down like Jesus did. Are we going to be gatherers? Or scatterers? It's my question for all of you.

The teenagers. The adults. Our senior members. Everybody in between. The kids who are still in the room. Are you going to gather people into God's church?

Because if we're not. We're actually scattering them. Isn't that a crazy concept? We're either building up God's kingdom.

[33 : 50] Or we're working against it. Even if we didn't want to be. Even if we don't see that we are. God is telling us you're either with me. Or you're actually working against me.

You're either gathering and building up my kingdom. My church. Or you're actually tearing it down. Don't be a scatterer. Be a gatherer. Whose side are you on?

Decide today. In this moment. I will be on the Lord's side. For me. For my house. We will be on the Lord's side. Would you bow your heads in prayer with me? God. That's our prayer to you right now. That we would be on the Lord's side. That we would be on your side. God. I look across this room. At so many faces.

People that I've come to know and love. In the last two years. Think so highly of. But God. You love them so much more.

[34 : 46] Than I ever could. My love pales in comparison. To your love for them. But your warning to us. Is so real. Even good.

Well meaning people. Who've been church members. And Christians. For many many years. Can be used to work. Against.

Our Lord. And his purposes. God. Let your purposes. Outweigh ours. Let them replace ours. Let them take the place. Of ours.

Our agenda. Our preferences. Let us set it aside. Let us take on yours. Whose side. Are we on? As the piano plays.

I'm going to ask you this. Our heads are bowed. In a moment. We'll stand. And we'll sing the song. That Jared's going to lead us in. But before we dismiss today.

[35 : 43] I just want to ask you that question. Are you on the Lord's side? Jesus said. A divided kingdom. Cannot stand. Can I make this application?

A divided church. Cannot stand. We're either on the Lord's side. Or we aren't. We're either walking with him. Into an uncertain future.

Or we're holding back. Saying I'm not sure about it. We're either gathering. Or we're scattering. Let me ask you a couple of questions.

As you sit in silence and prayer. Is there anyone here today. Who says. I don't know the Lord Jesus. As my personal savior. I need to make that decision.

Once and for all today. To place my faith in Jesus. Would you slip your hand up right now? Anybody in the room? Thank you. Let me follow it up with this question.

[36 : 46] If most of us in this room. Would say yes. I'm a child of God. Let me just ask you this. And you don't need to raise your hand. Are you gathering into his kingdom?

And that's it. I'm not going to ask if you're scattering. Because he already said. If you're not. Then you're scattering. So I'm just going to ask you that.

