

Matthew 12:1 ¶ At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

Matthew 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Matthew 12:3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

Matthew 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

This chapter opens with Jesus and His disciples walking through a field of corn on the Sabbath day. According to the law, they were allowed to take from the corn to fulfill their hunger.

Deuteronomy 23:24–25 “When thou comest into thy neighbour’s vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.”

However, according to the traditions of men that had perverted God’s intent of that law, the Pharisees considered their actions unlawful if done on the Sabbath day because it involved reaping and threshing; so they complained to Jesus.

As usual, the Lord used the Old Testament scripture in answering them. He reminded them that once when David and his men were hungry, he went into the house of God and took the shewbread that was intended only for the priests to provide food for him and his men—and he did it with the approval of the priest.

Leviticus 24:5–9 “And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.”

1 Samuel 21:3–6 “Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.”

The priest understood that the only bread available was the hallowed bread that had been set apart as a holy offering to God and designated as food for the priests. However, he also recognized that preservation of life was of more importance before God than keeping the particulars of the law. He stipulated that the men not eat it unless they had maintained sexual purity since it had been set apart before God. David affirmed that the men had not even been around women for three days and that they had maintained sexual purity. So the priest gave David the bread.

God instituted the law for man's benefit, to provide protection both spiritually and physically. Mark's record of this event clarifies this purpose for establishing the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27 "And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath...."

The Pharisees had perverted it to place huge burdens on the people that basically disregarded God's original intent. It had become a system of empty rituals.

Matthew 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

Matthew 12:6 But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.

Jesus then goes on to remind the Pharisees that according to the scripture, the priests do work on the Sabbath as required in the temple that break the established traditions of men, yet they are not accused of breaking the law. In other words, their service before God was considered more important than keeping men's traditions that were now considered equal to God's law.

Jesus then boldly declares that "in this place" was something greater than the temple. In my mind, that can only be a reference to Himself. So He was basically saying that serving Him was more important than maintaining the temple. The temple and everything that transpired there all pointed to Him. He was asserting that serving Him was more important than what was done in the temple.

Matthew 12:7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Matthew 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

Again, Jesus draws their attention to their lack of spiritual understanding. His question implies that lack of understanding. He says, "if you had known what this means," obviously implying that they didn't know. The quotation was from the book of Hosea.

Hosea 6:6 "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

God declared explicitly through the prophet Hosea that showing mercy was more important than keeping the required sacrifices. The Pharisees taught that keeping the law was more important than showing mercy. The law was a schoolmaster given to point us to our need for God. To love God and to know Him as Lord and Savior is more important than any ritual contained in the law. If the Pharisees had understood this, they would never have accused Jesus of doing wrong on the Sabbath. They should have recognized Him as Lord of the Sabbath, their Messiah, the very Son of God in flesh—but they didn't.

Matthew 12:9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

Matthew 12:10 And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

Matthew 12:11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out?

Matthew 12:12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Matthew 12:13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

I'm actually surprised Jesus got away from the Pharisees without further incident in light of His bold claims. Though Matthew's record makes it sound like Jesus headed straight for the synagogue, Luke's account of this event clarifies that it occurred on another Sabbath.

Luke 6:6 "And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered."

Jesus never avoided confrontation with the false shepherds that were the religious leaders of the Jewish people. In the synagogue that day was a man with a withered right hand. So, looking for another opportunity to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing, they asked Him if it was lawful to heal someone on Sabbath days.

I think the question from the Pharisees is really interesting in that it reveals that they recognized that Jesus possessed the power and authority to perform miracles. It is also very revealing that they were more concerned about proving Jesus guilty of some offense of the law than they were about the physical well-being of that man.

This time Mark's account of this event provides more information.

Mark 3:3-5 "And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

Jesus had the man stand up and then pointedly asked if it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath or evil—to save life or to kill. The answer was obvious, but the cowardly religious leaders stayed silent. Then Mark tells us that Jesus looked around at them all with anger because He was grieved at the hardness of their hearts. They were determined to hold to the letter of tradition that had become accepted as law rather than admit they were wrong and that it would be right to heal this man.

Jesus immediately declared that there was not one man present who would not rescue his sheep if it fell into a pit on the Sabbath day. He then pointed out that a man is of far more value than a sheep and that the law was never intended to forbid man from doing good or showing God's love to one another. Then, Jesus immediately told the man to stretch out his hand; and when he did, his hand was restored and normal.

I couldn't help but compare Jesus' response to my own responses to such disregard for quality of life and even life itself that permeate the cultures of the world today. Millions of babies continue to be aborted each year—even those who are late term and would easily survive if not murdered before birth. Euthanasia is growing in acceptance and practice. Laws that take advantage of and endanger our children to protect the perverted practices of the minority are being mainstreamed into the school system. Is my response anger at such things *and* grief over the spiritual hardness of hearts that promote and practice such things? I have to admit that many times it has just been anger.

Matthew 12:14 ¶ Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Matthew 12:15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

How sad! The fact that Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath—breaking Jewish tradition that had become law, not breaking God's law—provoked the Jewish leaders to plan how to kill Him. They didn't make their plans alone; Mark reveals that they plotted with the Herodians, those in favor with Herod.

Mark 3:6 "And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him."

Luke adds a bit more insight.

Luke 6:11 "And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."

The Greek for "madness" indicates that the religious leaders were filled with stupidity and rage—all because Jesus healed a man in defiance of their tradition and their self-righteous authority.

"When' Jesus knew it" – This phrase implies that their actions were made known to Him in some way. My guess is through the revelation of the Holy

Spirit; although, considering Luke's account, He could have read their rage in their demeanor. Significant to note is that Jesus left the area; He knew that His ministry was yet incomplete. Mark tells us that He headed to the sea.

Mark 3:7–8 "But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him."

When He left, "great multitudes" followed Him. Matthew notes that Jesus "healed them all." This implies that most of those following Him were seeking healing for themselves or others. Mark's account indicates that there were probably also many that wanted to witness His miracles.

Matthew 12:16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

Matthew 12:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Matthew 12:18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

Matthew 12:19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

Matthew 12:20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

Matthew 12:21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

I am always intrigued when I hear Jesus commanded the people to keep quiet about Him. How could you possibly expect "multitudes" to keep something quiet? Again, we look to Mark for a bit more information.

Mark 3:11–12 "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known."

Mark reveals that Jesus also forbade the unclean spirits that He exorcised to declaration that they recognized Him as the Son of God. Matthew notes that the actions of Jesus were in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.

*Isaiah 42:1–3 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. **A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench:** he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."*

At this point Matthew is emphasizing that Jesus came to earth as God's beloved servant. Everything He did was pleasing to God and in accordance with the leading of God's Holy Spirit. From the very beginning God's plan included justice and spiritual light for the Gentiles; they were always included in God's plan of salvation. Jesus humbly yet boldly followed the Spirit's leading without

responding in anger.

I liked David Guzik's comments on verse 20: "Often we feel that God deals roughly with our weaknesses and failures. Just the opposite is true. He deals with them gently, tenderly, helping them along until the **bruised reed** is strong and the **smoking flax** is in proper flame. Jesus sees the value in a **bruised reed**, even when no one else can. He can make beautiful music come from a **bruised reed**, as He puts His strength in it! Though a **smoking flax** is good for nothing, Jesus knows it is valuable for what it can be when it is refreshed with oil. Many of us are like the **bruised reed**, and we need to *be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man* (Ephesians 3:16). Others are like the **smoking flax**, and can only burn brightly for the LORD again when we are drenched in oil, with a constant supply coming, as we are filled with the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 12:22 ¶ Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

Matthew 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

Matthew next tells us that Jesus healed a man that was possessed by a devil that caused him to be blind and unable to speak. The people who witnessed this miracle were amazed and began surmising that this was "the son of David," a term that referenced the Messiah. This particular miracle was linked with the coming Messiah according to the prophets.

Isaiah 35:4-5 "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped."

I think the reality of demon possession is something that is not often considered regarding physical problems experienced by people today. Of course, not all physical problems are due to demon possession; but I think it highly probable that demon possession is more prevalent than we are willing to acknowledge or even think about.

Note: People possessing saving faith in the Lord Jesus cannot be possessed by demons because they have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in them.

Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Matthew 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Matthew 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

The Pharisees were very quick to denounce the thought that Jesus could be the

Messiah. They declared that his ability to cast out devils was through the empowerment of Beelzebub (another name for Satan), the prince of devils. Jesus knew what they were saying as well as what they were thinking (I believe through the revelation of the Holy Spirit) and responded with logic. My summary—No kingdom or city that has divided leadership will prosper. If Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom won't endure.

I liked this quote from Guzik attributed to Bruce: "Satan may be wicked, He says in effect, but he is not a fool."

Matthew 12:27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Matthew 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Matthew 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Matthew 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Jesus then goes on to pose His own question. Again, my paraphrase—If you say that I am casting out devils in the power of Beelzebub, in whose power does your own people claim to cast them out? This question implies that there were those in the ranks of the religious leaders of that day who claimed to be able to cast out devils as well. He knew that those men would readily deny that it was through the power of Beelzebub.

Jesus went on to declare that if, however, His power to cast out devils was due to the Spirit of God at work through Him, they should recognize that His actions verified His message of the coming of the kingdom of God (and Him as the Messiah).

Jesus goes on to reason that one cannot just enter a strong man's house and cause destruction without first binding the strong man. Only after binding the strong man can he destroy his home. John MacArthur words it well: "Jesus is saying, 'If I can control the demons of Satan, then I must be able to tie up the Devil himself. If I am the one who can tie up the Devil, then God is in your midst.'"

Jesus then basically says that you are either on my side or you are not. My paraphrase—If you are not on My side, you are My enemy.

This is a very important truth. The world is divided into two groups of people—those that follow Jesus as Lord and Savior and those that don't—those that possess eternal life and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and those who are spiritually dead and separated from God. There are no other categories.

Matthew 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Matthew 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

Powerful statement in these verses; there is a sin that cannot be forgiven. Jesus declares that every type of sin and blasphemy can be forgiven man except that of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. So what does that mean? The Greek for “blasphemy” is defined as vilification or evil speaking. In the context, the issue concerns the power through which the Lord Jesus is performing miracles. The Pharisees are declaring the work of the Holy Spirit to be the work of Satan. It is one thing to blaspheme the man Jesus, but an entirely different thing to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

We know that the one sin that stands between man and salvation is rejecting the Lord Jesus as Savior. This is in reality what the Pharisees were doing. Even though the evidence testified to the truth that He was the Messiah according to the prophecies of scripture, they chose to attribute that evidence to the power of Satan at work in Him. To persist in that belief would result in eternal condemnation.

John 3:17–19 “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Adam Clarke makes an important observation concerning this sin.

“Many sincere people have been grievously troubled with apprehensions that they had committed the unpardonable sin; but let it be observed that no man who believes the Divine mission of Jesus Christ, ever can commit this sin: therefore let no man's heart fail because of it, from henceforth and for ever, Amen.”

John MacArthur gives the other side of the coin: “Forgiveness is based on repentance and faith in Christ. If they concluded that Christ was filled with the Devil, they certainly weren't going to listen to His message about repentance and put their faith in Him. The reason they could never be forgiven is because they would never believe. Why? Because when they had been given all the evidence there was, their conclusion was the very opposite of the truth; therefore, they were hopeless.”

There is another significant truth declared in these verses—There is a world to come after this present world. Important to note, however, is that there are no second chances to make things right in the world to come. The choice you make now concerning Jesus Christ determines your eternal future. To accept Him as Lord and Savior is to enjoy eternal life in His presence; to reject Him is to suffer eternal condemnation.

Matthew 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

Matthew 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Matthew 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Good fruit comes from good trees and bad fruit comes from bad trees. Good trees do not produce bad fruit and bad trees do not produce good fruit. In other words, you can't call the works of Jesus good and Him bad.

When Jesus compares these men to "vipers," He is comparing them to poisonous snakes among the people—snakes that cause harm because they are false teachers and hypocrites. They exude a façade of righteousness that covers an evil heart.

JFB makes an important point in connection with these verses: "The Pharisees have been attributing to Satan the work of the Spirit and have been doing so, as Jesus makes plain, in such a way as to reveal that they speak, not out of ignorance or unbelief, but out of a conscious disputing of what should never be disputed." They were speaking from the root of evil that had grown to reveal that they were "bad trees."

In these verses Jesus is basically telling the people that a man's words and actions—whether good or corrupt—identify the heart of that man. The Pharisees spoke evil against the work of the Holy Spirit done through Jesus that revealed their character as corrupt. A man of good character speaks what is good and a man of bad character speaks what is bad. The fruit of one's lips testify to the character of the speaker.

Isaiah 32:6 "For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail."

Psalms 10:4&7 "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts....His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity."

Matthew 12:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Matthew 12:37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

I think it is very important at this point to remember context. The context of this truth is a conversation regarding what is in a man's heart as he speaks. The Greek for "idle" references something spoken that is lazy and useless; Webster adds the idea of thoughtless speaking. The words we speak provide a mirror into one's heart and character. Note that Jesus declares that one's words will testify for or against him in "the day of judgment." That is a reference to the

great white throne judgment referenced in Revelation.

Revelation 20:11–12 “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Thankfully, those who have placed their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and will have no part in that judgment. This truth, however, should give us all pause. As a child, I remember using the saying: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Oh how false was that statement! Scripture has much to say about the power of words.

Proverbs 12:25 “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.”

Proverbs 18:8 “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

Proverbs 21:23 “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”

Proverbs 25:11 “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

James 3:5–8 “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

Matthew 12:38 ¶ Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

Matthew 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

Matthew 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

It is amazing to me that some of the scribes and Pharisees actually had the gall to follow up the words of Jesus by asking Him to show them another miracle. Since they had already revealed their hardened hearts, Jesus refused their request. He declared that it was a wicked and adulterous people who would ask for a further sign in light of all He had already shown them. Jesus rightly identified these so-called righteous men as wicked and spiritual adulterers; they weren’t even considering the words of the prophets declared in scripture about the coming Messiah. They were more concerned about maintaining their own positions of

influence and power among the people.

Jesus did, however, promise them one more sign—that of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (great fish) before being restored to the land of the living, so also would the Son of man spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth before being raised again to new life. In other words, Jesus is already pointing to His resurrection from the dead after his death on the cross as the definitive affirming sign that He is the Messiah.

Personally, I believe “the heart of the earth” is a reference to the place known as Paradise or Abraham’s bosom—the place to which Lazarus was taken, the place where the spirits of men of faith resided until Jesus conquered the grave and took them to heaven.

Luke 16:20–22 “And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus....And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom....”

Ephesians 4:7–10 “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”

Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Matthew 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Jesus goes on to declare that the people of Nineveh will stand in condemnation of this generation because they responded with repentance and belief to the message of God from the prophet Jonah. The implication—Jesus knew this generation would reject Him as the Messiah even after His resurrection testified to that truth.

Interesting to me is that Jesus also noted that the “queen of the south,” the Queen of Sheba, would also stand in condemnation of this generation. She traveled a very long way to ascertain the truth about the wisdom of King Solomon—and she readily believed it to be from God.

1 Kings 10:1–9 “And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions....And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built....she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it....Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of

Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

Jesus boldly declared that He is greater than both Jonah and Solomon in spite of what they believed Him to be. These religious leaders weren't even as discerning as these noted Gentiles.

Matthew 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Matthew 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

Matthew 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

As He so often does, Jesus goes on to paint a word picture concerning the future of "this wicked generation" of men who reject Him as Messiah. He describes an unclean spirit being cast out of a man only to eventually return to find that there is nothing there to prevent his taking possession of that man once again. This time, however, he decides to go get seven of his buddies who are even more wicked than he is to come and dwell with him. The man is then worse off than he was originally.

Jesus is saying that even though this generation worked hard at keeping religious traditions and rituals, their hearts were empty and without faith. Having seen and heard the Messiah and rejected Him would only serve as evidence against them in the coming judgment. The wording also implies a harsher verdict; so, again we find a reference to degrees of eternal punishment as noted in the previous chapter.

Matthew 12:46 ¶ While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

Matthew 12:47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

Matthew 12:48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

Matthew 12:49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

Matthew 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

While Jesus was still talking with the people, we learn that His mother Mary and his brothers showed up wanting to speak with Him. When He was told that they were there, He gave a puzzling answer—"Who is my mother? And who are my brothers?" He then stretched out His hand toward His disciples and identified them as His mother and brothers—His family. He then clarified that anyone that does the will of "My Father which is in heaven"—a specific reference to Almighty God—is His brother, sister and mother.

Jesus wasn't being disrespectful to His earthly family; I am sure (though we are not told) that He spent the time with them that was requested in honor of His mother.

Exodus 20:12 "Honour thy father and thy mother...."

He took advantage of the opportunity to explain that He has a bigger spiritual family with the Father that includes all who do the will of the Father—all that yield to Him as LORD as evidenced by placing their faith in His Son Jesus. The implication—you can be part of that family.