

12:33 *Make*- In their interpretation of Jesus they had to see Him as either good or bad, and He urged them to make a choice. The miracles were good fruit- therefore He was good, and working by God's Spirit rather than being an agent of Satan. The fruit of the tree equals the words (as in Prov. 12:14; 13:2); a corrupt man will speak corrupt words. And these will be the basis of his condemnation. By contrast "the fruit of *our* lips" should be praise (Heb. 13:15). "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29) refers to this passage- the corrupt fruit is corrupt words. But the idea is that we bear the fruit *now*- our words *now* are our fruit.

Make the tree- The Lord had taught in the Sermon on the Mount that it was a fundamental principle with Him that true spirituality cannot be hidden; what is within is openly revealed, even in this life. Good fruit means a good tree. His works were the good fruit. The Pharisees were claiming that His fruits, His works, were corrupt, and therefore He was corrupt. The Lord is asking everyone, especially the disciples, to decide one way or the other- either He is a good man doing good works, or an evil man doing evil works. There is no half way position, as He made clear in :30 ("He that is not with Me is against Me"). They were to 'make' or consider, decide, about Him one way or the other.

Corrupt tree- As so often, the Lord is repeating the principles of His opening manifesto in the Sermon on the Mount (cp. Mt. 7:17,18). The fruit of a man's life reflects who he essentially is; the good fruit of the Lord's miracles was clear proof He was not of Satan but God's Son and supreme agent.

12:34 *Generation of vipers*- A clear allusion to the Jews as the seed of the serpent of Gen. 3:15 who would be the ones who would be in conflict with the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus.

How can you- Because of the principle that who we are internally is ultimately reflected by our external actions and words (:33), it was impossible that their 'good words' could be sincere because the other fruit of their lives showed they were rotten within. "How can you..." doesn't mean that they could not change. It means that given their present internal condition, they could never speak good things. The 'good word' which the context has in view is the confession that Jesus of Nazareth is God's Son; the evil word was that He was Satan's agent. This wrong judgment of Jesus' identity was because of their evil heart. Their doctrinal mistake was a reflection of their internal fleshly thinking. The Lord said that the Jews were evil, and therefore good things could not come from them (Mt. 12:34; 7:17-20). And yet He also said, presumably with the same audience in mind, that although they were evil, they potentially knew how to give good things, e.g. to their children; and therefore how much could God give them good things if they repented (Mt. 7:11).

Speak good things- This may be an intensive plural, 'the good thing'. The good thing to be spoken was the confession that Jesus was Son of God. John's Gospel emphasizes this, and Rom. 10:9,10 suggests that a verbal confession of Jesus as Lord was required in the conversion process: "if you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation". This confession was likely made at baptism, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch. We must ever remember that Matthew's gospel is the transcript of his preaching of the Gospel; it was a missionary document, intended to bring forth the confession that Jesus is Lord and Son of God. This is not to say that the Lord's teaching here does not establish basic principles regarding the connection between thought and speech. It does. But the specific context is of confessing that He is Lord rather than of Satan.

The abundance- Gk. 'that which remains'. The idea may be that a certain amount of human thought is taken up with basic human functioning, but that which remains over and above that, the part of our thinking which we can consciously control, is what must be controlled- for it is that part of our thinking which controls the words and actions which are the fruit on the tree of a man's life (:33).

12:35 *Good man-* The good man is as the good tree. His good fruit or works is because of a good mind within- and vice versa. The Lord as always took the issue to its deepest essence- which was within the deepest heart. He was the ultimate "good man" and good tree. His good works came forth from deep within Him, they were a reflection of His mind.

Good treasure- The heart is our wealth. This is the real gold and silver, the core value of a man's life- what we are thinking about. Spiritual mindedness is the essence of Christianity.

Evil man- The Lord uses the same word to speak of "this evil (AV "wicked") generation" in :45. The problem with Jewish society as a whole was how they thought. This is the Biblical emphasis- sin comes from our thinking, and not because society is controlled by a personal cosmic 'satan' figure.

Evil things- The words of blasphemy accusing Jesus of being Satan's agent.

12:36 *Every idle word-* Gk. lazy, unproductive. At first blush, this seems a strange word to use in the context of explaining that the words of blasphemy the Jews had uttered would be judged at the last day. We expect a word to be used which carries the sense of blasphemy or proactive aggression. Instead, the Lord uses this word for "idle". His point was that what is ultimately

wrong with blasphemy is what is wrong with all unspiritual language- it is not creative, not productive, it is a waste of potential resource. We marvel at His insight. Words can be powerful and creative, but we will answer for those which are not. The connection between Rom. 14:12 and Mt. 12:36 suggests that Paul recognized that we all speak idle words which we will have to give account of at judgment. Therefore, because of our rampant tongue, we will stand in deep need of grace. So therefore, Paul says, you'd better be soft on your brother now, in this life. Every word will be judged (Mt. 12:36), and in some cases by words we will be justified and by our speech we will be condemned. So we must speak as those who will be judged for what we speak (James 2:12). The man who *says* to his brother 'Raca' or 'You fool' is in real danger of hell fire (Mt. 5:22). The tongue has the power to cast a man into hell fire (James 3:5,6)- some may be condemned for what they have said, perhaps connecting with how the beast is thrown into the fire of destruction because of his words (Dan. 7:11,12). Thus there is a link between the judgment of the unworthy and that of the world. The process of condemnation will remind the wicked of all their hard words and hard deeds (Jude 15). Yet now, we can speak words all too easily. Yet we talk and speak as those whose words will be taken into account at the last day. This little selection of passages is powerful- or ought to be. There is reason to think that specific record is kept of incidents, and in some form there will be a 'going through' of them. Thus when self-righteous Jews told their brethren "Stand by yourself, come not near me, for I am holier than you", God comments that "This is written before Me... I will recompense" (Is. 65:5,6).

They shall give account- For every idle *rhema* ["word"], men shall give a *logos* ["account"], another word. We shall have to explain the *logos*, the intention, of idle words. Literally we will have to give a word for a word. This surely suggests that words will be as it were played back to us in that day and we will explain the *logos*, the intention and inner sense, behind those words. But the Lord of course will know all this anyway. It will be a profound preparation for entry into eternity- to have our idle words played back to us, and our having to give an explanation of what our innermost thought behind them really was. The whole process will elicit self-knowledge to the ultimate extent. The words behind 'give an account' are found elsewhere in NT teaching about judgment. We must give an account of our stewardship of the Lord's goods (Lk. 16:2), give an account of our moral lives (1 Pet. 4:3-5), give an account of those under our spiritual care (Heb. 13:17); and give an account / *logos* of our idle words. Without doubt, judgment will not be a mere yes / no decision, nor an awards ceremony. It will be a revelation to ourselves of our motives, the *logos* behind our words and actions.

12:37 *Words-* In the context, the Lord is referring to how their words regarding Him being an agent of Satan would lead to their condemnation. Yet their words had all started from basic jealousy which ran on unbridled. From their own mouth and words men will be judged (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 19:22 cp. 2 Sam. 1:16). The reference may be to Eliphaz (Job 15:6): "Your own

mouth condemns you, and not I"; or to Prov. 18:21: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue". And yet perhaps even now, men are justified by their words before the court of Heaven- for 'justify' means to pronounce righteous, and this pronouncement / justification is therefore given even now. "So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it" (1 Kings 20:40). It could even be that the Lord cites the condemnatory words of the rejected uttered during their lifetimes and leaves these as their condemnation. Woe, therefore, to he or she who has said unrepentantly that they don't want to be in the Kingdom if brother x or sister y are going to be there. The specific words which some have spoken will be the reason for their condemnation. "Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue" (Hos. 7:16)- not so much for their idolatry, their worldliness... but for their uncontrolled and cruel words. By our words we will be acquitted [Gk.] and by our words we will be condemned (Mt. 12:37)- but it is God who acquits, and therefore nobody but He can condemn us (Rom. 8:33; Is. 50:8). Yet how does and how will He do this? Surely on the basis of our acquittal or condemnation of others. The connection in thought surely shows that through our words, we form our own judgment of ourselves, to acquittal or condemnation.

By your words- Our eternal destiny will be *ek*, from out of, our words. If the Lord had simply meant 'according to, on account of', another word or construction would've been used. The use of *ek* suggests that the decision on our eternity will not only be on account of our words, but *in* our own words- for it will be *out of* our own mouths. We think of David's response to Nathan's parable and how his own words were his appropriate judgment. Lk. 19:22 is clearest: "Out of [*ek*] your own mouth will I judge you". The servants' *thoughts* about his Lord are then cited back to him as if they were his spoken *words*, and he is judged according to those words. There could be no more powerful exhortation as to the significance of spoken words, but the appeal must not be to merely curb the tongue by brute psychological force, but rather to have the new mind and spirit of Christ which simply will not speak words leading to condemnation. The intensity and deeply personal force of the Lord's reasoning was such that that group of Pharisees went silent and brought in another group to raise yet more legalistic and theological issues with Him; but those things were and are to this day simply a way of trying to take the Lord's intense and practical *moral* pressure off us. It is a common theme that the wicked snare themselves, falling into their own pit, judged by their own words, rather than God specifically snaring them (e.g. Ps. 7:15; 9:15; 57:6; Prov. 26:27; 28:10; Ecc. 10:8). From their own mouth and words men will be judged (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 19:22 cp. 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Kings 20:40). It could even be that the Lord cites the condemnatory words of the rejected uttered during their lifetimes and leaves these as their condemnation. Woe, therefore, to he or she who has said unrepentantly that they don't want to be in the Kingdom if brother x or sister y are going to be there. "He that keeps his mouth keeps his life; but he that opens wide his lips [in this life] shall have destruction" at judgment day (Prov. 13:3). The link between the final verdict and the words we use today is that clear. See on 21:43.

By your words you shall be justified... condemned- The words by which men shall be condemned are clear from the context- the words of blasphemy against Jesus, making Him the supreme agent of Satan rather than of God. But this is not to say that a general principle is not also being demonstrated. Words reflect the inner man, the Lord has taught- and so they are a fair index for judgment. This cuts right through the idea that we can harbour evil thoughts and yet cover them in nicespeak. The culture of nicespeak lays revealed for what it is- the Lord is saying that ultimately, our words *will* at some point reflect our thoughts. The whole section began with the explanation in :24,25 that the Jews "said" but Jesus "knew their thoughts". I suggested in the commentary there that perhaps they never actually spoke those words out loud. It is these thoughts for which by which we shall be judged.

Justified- At first sight it could seem that this contradicts Paul's argument for justification by grace alone- and not by the steel willed control of our words. But Romans 1-8 is a unit, and the teaching about justification by grace is on the basis that those in Christ are in a status, "in Christ", under grace- and in that status, the Spirit of God is at work in the human minds of all those who are in that status. And the Lord has made clear here that the words He will judge are those which are a direct reflection of the human heart or spirit.

12:38 *Some-* It would seem these were a different group of Pharisees to those with whom the Lord was in engagement earlier in the chapter; they address Him as "Master". They appear at least to be trying a more subtle approach than the previous group. Mk. 3:22 notes that this group had come from Jerusalem.

We want to see a sign- The context of the chapter makes it clear that the Lord had been clearly doing signs / miracles. So maybe the emphasis is on *we*. They were maybe claiming that they personally had not been present when the signs were done, and now they wanted to see one. But Lk. 11:16 adds the detail that they sought a "sign *from Heaven*". This continues the issue under debate; the Pharisees accepted that Jesus was doing signs / miracles, but they considered them to be from 'Satan'; the Lord has responded by saying that His good works show He is a good man working on God's behalf, and that they would be called to account at the last day for their blasphemy. But it seems this other group of Pharisees continue in the blasphemous position- their response is to assume that the earlier miracles were signs from 'Satan', but now they give the Lord a chance to do a sign / miracle from God ("Heaven"). They repeated this request later (Mt. 16:1), and again the Lord answered them with "the sign of the prophet Jonah". It's not necessarily wrong to require a sign- Gideon's example comes to mind. The disciples themselves asked for a sign (Mt. 24:3), and the Lord answered them to the effect that there would be "the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven" (Mt. 24:30). "In" Heaven can mean 'by the instrumentality of [Heaven]'. The similarity of words and concepts is so close that there must be some continuity in

meaning. It could be that the sign of the Son of Man given by Heaven in the last days is the sign of Jonah- the successful preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles and the resurrection from the dead.

12:39 *Adulterous generation*- The Lord may have in mind female adultery, alluding to the Old Testament passages which liken Israel to an adulterous wife. The parallel is between self-righteous Jewish society of the first century and sexually immoral but penitent Nineveh of previous centuries.

No sign- The idea could be 'no further sign', as if the Lord was saying that He would do no further dramatic miracles to seek to persuade the Pharisees. In this case, the allusion would be to the Egyptians not believing the signs given them (Ex. 4:9), resulting in their final destruction. Unbelieving Israel are no better than Egypt / the world, and will "be condemned with the world". Note that here as often we have to read in an ellipsis: 'No more sign'. For He had been doing signs / miracles in abundance. Or perhaps, seeing that He did continue doing miracles: 'No sign greater than [that of Jonah]'.

Jonah- The 'resurrected' Jonah was a type of the Lord- and he was a 'sign' to the Ninevites presumably in that he still bore in his body the marks of a man who had been three days within a fish. It could be that the fish beached itself, and vomited Jonah out of its stomach in its death throes (this is how beached whales meet their end). In this case, the fish would have drawn the attention of the local population, as would have the man with bleached hair and strange skin who walked away from it. We too as witnesses of Christ will have something about us that is unintentionally striking in the eyes of those with whom we mix. There was no human chance that Jonah would be listened to when he came to preach judgment against Nineveh. Some guy standing on the edge of town, saying 'You're all gonna be destroyed'. People would have laughed, ignored him, or told him to shut up. But there was something about him that was gripping and arresting. He was living proof that the judgment of God is real, and that His mercy is just as real. Presumably Jonah must have said far more than "Nineveh is going to be destroyed".

It is a worthwhile speculation that for Jonah to be a sign to the Ninevites by reason of being three days in the whale (Mt. 12:38-40), he must have borne in his body the marks of his experience for all to see, as our Lord did. Being inside the fish for that period may have made his flesh change colour or bear some other physical mark so that he could be a sign to them of what had happened. Doubtless he recounted his story to them- so that they were encouraged by the fact of God's love to the resurrected Jonah to repent and likewise throw themselves on God's mercy. In all this we see Jonah as a type of Christ. They would have looked upon that man as we look upon

Jesus, to see the love of God manifested in him; they responded by repenting in sackcloth, casting off their materialism, and living in a way that showed their complete belief that " the judge stands before the door" . What is our response to Jonah/Jesus?

12:40 *Three days and three nights*- Matthew's Gospel doesn't seem to teach a literal 72 hours for Jesus in the grave. But a 'day' can mean 'part of a day' - as in 1 Kings 20:29; Esther 4:16-5:1. The term is surely used to highlight the connection with Jonah's experience.

As Jonah was three days in the whale and then came up out of it to preach to the Gentiles, so the Lord would be three days in the grave and then would rise- as a sign to the Jews. But how was His resurrection a sign to them, seeing they never saw His risen body? Yet the Lord's reasoning demands that His resurrection be a sign to them, just as tangible as the re-appearance of the drowned Jonah. But, the Jews never saw Him after the resurrection...? The resolution must be that in the preaching of the risen Jesus by those in Him, it was as if the Jews saw Him, risen and standing as a sign before them, every bit as real as the Jonah who emerged from the whale after three days.

12:41 *Rise in judgment*- Possibly an allusion to the resurrection of the responsible at the last day, but more likely the figure is of a judge arising in judgment to state the verdict; which in this case, is condemnation. The Lord in :27 has spoken of how the children of the Jews would judge those Jews in the last day. The Lord clearly seems to envisage the judgment process as having a public dimension to it. The fact one person was spiritually responsive, given a similar or harder set of circumstances than what another has had who did not respond, will therefore as it were be the judgment of the person who didn't respond. It clearly won't be merely an awards ceremony nor a yes / no decision, but rather will context and precedent from others be taken into account. 'If *they* responded and *you* did not, given similar circumstances, then *they* will condemn *you*' - that seems to be the Lord's reasoning.

Condemn it- The truly righteous among the remnant "shall tread down the wicked... (as) ashes under the soles of your feet" (Malachi 4:3). "The wicked" are those of Malachi 3:18 and 4:1 - the unspiritual element amongst the latter-day Jewish 'remnant' in Jerusalem. This implies that in some way the spiritual Jews acceptable to Jesus will mete out judgment on the rejected ones. Perhaps in similar fashion the men of Nineveh will condemn the first century Jews at the judgment, and we will judge Angels (1 Cor. 6:3). In this way the righteous remnant shall " discern (judge) between the righteous and the wicked" (Malachi 3:18). The men of Nineveh will

condemn first century Israel, just as the folly of the rejected will be made manifest unto all men (2 Tim. 3:9). This is not so as to simply humiliate the rejected. It is so that the faithful *learn* something too. This was all foreshadowed in the way that Israel experienced their judgments in the sight of the nations, so that God's principles would be taught even to the Gentile world (Ez. 5:8,15). Indeed, the idea of God executing judgment on His people *in the sight* of others is quite common (e.g. Ez. 5:8; 16:41). But we can learn the principles of God's judgments right now, from His word.

This generation- Again we must read in an ellipsis, '[the people of] this generation'. For individuals and not entire generations will be judged.

They repented- The Lord is going to soon claim that initially the people had responded to John's message- the demon had been as it were cast out and the house of Israel left swept and cleaned (:43,44). But both John and Jesus appealed for repentance, in the very same words: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2; 4:17). But they had not really repented; they had responded to a religious message but not really repented. And the challenge comes down to us- as to whether our repentance, along with any spiritual act, is indeed the real thing or a mere appearance.

The preaching- This effectively is a noun, referring to "the preaching" as in the message of Jonah. What he preached was judgment to come, and the Ninevites repented on hearing it. The Lord was teaching not only judgment to come, but was making specific the call to repentance implicit within that message, and urging people to accept God's grace. Hence those who heard Him were even more guilty before the Ninevites. Jonah's preaching occurred *after* he had been three days within the whale; after the Lord had been three days in the earth, He too would preach mightily, through the ministry of those 'in Him' who were effectively His representatives and appealed on His behalf. But He reasons as if that appeal was already being made- as if in essence He had already passed through the cross and resurrection. This is not the only time He reasons in this way; in proclaiming Himself Lord, the serpent lifted up on the pole, the One who had already "overcome the world", He reasoned as if the successful outcome of His death had already occurred. Such was His faith that He would come forth triumphant.

12:42 *Rise up in the judgment-* "Rise up" translates *egeiro* whereas "rise up" in :41 translates *anistemi*. The Ninevites will "rise in judgment", as a judge arises to pronounce a verdict; whereas the Queen of the South arises "in *the* judgment", with the article. The difference may be

because the Queen of the South is being portrayed as being resurrected along with the people of the Lord's generation. The reference is perhaps more to resurrection than to arising in judgment.

Uttermost parts of the earth- If Sheba is at the very end of 'the earth', we have another confirmation that the 'earth' or land in Scripture often refers to the land promised to Abraham, and not the entire planet. The point is that she made a huge effort to come to hear Divine truth, whereas Christ as "the wisdom of God" stood before their eyes and they refused to believe and repent. The parallel is between the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites, who repented. We may be able to infer that she likewise repented upon hearing Solomon's wisdom. The whole theme in this section is of the need to make an abiding repentance upon hearing God's Truth as spoken by His Son.

12:43 The ministry of the Lord Jesus was a follow up to that of John the Baptist, and that theme is never far from us in Matthew's Gospel. The unclean spirit was cast out of Israel due to their surface level response to John's preaching- this was the sweeping of the house. But it returned and that generation became more evil than before. This lays the basis for the parable of the sower, which was told the same day (13:1)- the seed initially experienced some growth, but then the 'evil one', the Jewish system, stunted that growth.

Dry places- Demons supposedly didn't like water (as in Mt. 8:28-34). Again we find the Lord using the language of the day without correcting it. The reference is also to the Jews going into the wilderness to hear John's preaching.

Seeking rest- The Lord has just given an invitation to come to *Him* and find "rest" (Mt. 11:28 s.w.). Hebrews may allude here when suggesting that Moses and Joshua could not give Israel "rest", only Messiah could (Heb. 4:8-10). John's work gave Israel a desire for this "rest" and pointed them to Jesus as the One who could give it- but they were refusing to take it. And so the (parabolic) unclean spirit was returning to the house of Israel and would make them worse than before.

12:44 *I will return-* The Greek word is elsewhere translated to convert (Mt. 13:15). Israel's rejection of Jesus was effectively a re-conversion away from John's message. The same word is used of how John was to convert Israel to their God (Lk. 1:16,17).

I came out- The same word is used thrice about that generation going out into the wilderness to hear John (Mt. 11:7-9).

Swept- The only other usage of the word is in the Lord's self-description of His 'sweeping' the house of Israel in order to find the lost (Lk. 15:8). The house of Israel had been swept- but the nation had not been 'found' because they would not come to Jesus in repentance.

12:45 *The last-* "State" is an addition from the translators. "The last" was the state of condemnation which that generation ended up in. The Lord's comments that the first would be "last" (Mt. 20:16) could therefore be taken as a reference to the final condemnation of the Jewish religious leadership, "the first". However, "the last", the *eschatos*, could refer to their status at the judgment of the last day. But the essence of judgment is now, and the Lord saw them as already in that state. It "*is worse*" and yet thus 'it *shall be*' for that generation.

12:46 *He talked-* The same word is used later in the verse, in reporting that His mother and brothers wished to talk / speak with Him. The impression is given that He was talking, but they wanted to talk to Him rather than to listen.

Mt. 12:46-50 five times repeats the phrase "his mother and his brethren", as if to link her with them. In the parallel Mk. 3:21,31-35 we read of how "his own" family thought He was crazy and came to talk to Him. Then we read that it was His mother and brothers who demanded an audience with Him, perhaps linking Mary with her other children. Their cynicism of Jesus, their lack of perception of Him, came to influence her- for He effectively rebuffs her special claims upon Him by saying that His mother and brethren are all who hear God's word. Clearly the brothers, who didn't believe in Jesus (Jn. 7:5) influenced her. When He speaks of how His real family are those who hear the word of God and do it, the Lord is alluding to Dt. 33:9, where we have the commendation of Levi for refusing to recognize his apostate brethren at the time of the golden calf: "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren... for they [Levi] have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant". The last sentence is the essence of the Lord's saying that His true family are those who keep God's word and do it. The strong implication of the allusion is that the Lord felt that His mother and brethren had committed some kind of apostasy.

12:47 *Desiring to speak*- Note how in the parallel Mk. 3:32 we read that “thy mother and brethren seek for thee”, and in Mk. 1:37 the same word occurred: “all men seek for thee”; and also in Lk. 2:45, of how Mary sought for Jesus. The similarity is such that the intention may be to show us how Mary had been influenced by the world's perception of Him. And we too can be influenced by the world's light hearted view of the Lord of glory. It's so easy to allow their patterns of language use to lead us into blaspheming, taking His Name in vain, seeing His religion as just a hobby, a social activity... In passing, it was not that the Lord was insensitive or discounted her. It is in Mt. 12:46 that Mary wanted to speak with Him, and presumably she did- but then He goes to His home town, back to where she had come from (Mt. 13:54), as if He did in fact pay her attention.

12:48 *My mother... my brothers*- These terms are repeated three times in :48-50. In a fiercely family based society, such radical redefinition of family was remarkable, and the Lord was labouring His radical point lest there be any misunderstanding. He was creating a new family, based around hearing and doing His Father's will; there was a new Father, God, and those who did His will were His children. The nature of the scene portrayed here seems to suggest that in His case, as in so many others afterwards, the new spiritual family was separate from the family of origin; for they were here outside the house. And we must bear in mind that 'house' meant not only a building but a family. This gives new meaning to the way that Paul and James (especially James) so love to address their brethren as "my brothers" (James 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 5:10,12). Their brethren in Christ were really their new family. And it should be the same for us. The divided state of the body of Christ today is surely a result of over-familiar, over-privileged believers failing to grasp the wonder of the fact that others have come into the family by conversion into Christ. In believing communities comprised of first generation converts, there is generally a far greater sense of brotherhood.

12:49 *Stretched forth His hand toward*- Another mark of an eyewitness account. Given the loss of family many had experienced, this visual image would've remained in their memories, to be drawn upon in the hard times of rejection by family of origin. The Greek *epi* translated "toward" could strictly mean 'over'- as if the disciples were sitting near to Him. For it was they, rather than the general audience, whom He knew were doing the Father's will.

The Lord implied that those who did God's will were closer to Him than His physical mother or sister or brother (Mt. 12:48-50). It has been observed that “in a kinship-oriented society like Israel, it must have been startling for people to hear of a bond that was even deeper than that of the natural family”. And so it is in many parts of the world today.

12:50 The very fact Christ calls us brethren in Mt. 12:50 the Hebrew writer saw as proof of Christ's humanity (= Heb. 2:11).

Do the will- Another allusion back to the crunch line of the Sermon on the Mount, that the true community would be comprised of those who did the will of the Father in Heaven. The Lord spoke of Himself as 'doing the will' of the Father, supremely in His death on the cross. Heb. 10:7,9 speaks of the Son 'doing the will' of God in dying on the cross, and the passage then goes on to appeal to us likewise to do that same will (Heb. 10:36). And it is God who will work in us through the Spirit to empower us to do that will- if we ourselves so wish (Heb. 13:21).

Notes

(1)W.D. Davies *Matthew* p. 312 (*op cit.*).

(2)W.D. Davies *Matthew* p. 313 (*op cit.*).