

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### Lesson 46, Chapter 12 Continued 3

Last week in Matthew chapter 12 we left off with the thorny issue of what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit amounts to. And the reason that is important is because even Christ's death on the Cross can't atone for it. I'll begin with the bottom line: if you're worried that you have really fouled up in your walk with God and committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit... described as the unforgivable sin... you probably haven't. The reason is that your relationship with God matters to you or you wouldn't care about blasphemy.

When Jesus was speaking about blasphemy, it was directed at the Pharisees and Scribes.... the Jewish Synagogue religious leadership. It was to those who had knowledge of the **Tanach** (the Old Testament) and yet were so hard hearted and so eager to protect their turf, they were willing to slander Yeshua, who spoke truth about the Torah and the Prophets, and thus they tried to thwart the work of the Holy Spirit among the common people; a divine work to redeem and save them. When people (here, the Jewish leadership) know the Holy Scriptures and still put up a wall against God's Messiah, they are in more peril than pagans who know nothing at all (and Yeshua has already given examples of this reality).

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not about some particularly egregious sin of omission or commission; it is about joining the opposition against God. We all sin; and we'll continue to sin even after we've accepted Yeshua as Lord and Savior, although we are to be cognizant of the great gift that has been given to us, and our obligation to follow the principles of the Law of Moses that show us what sin is. The sad fact is that our fallen nature continues to exist within us (or, at the least, a powerful remnant of it) and it taints our thoughts and behavior some times. The sins that Jesus atoned for are not only the sins we committed before

we were saved, but also for those that WILL come after. It's not that this blessing gives us license to sin and not be concerned about it; but it does show us what a loving and long suffering God we worship. Paul says this about the subject of sin, including what our attitude and actions are to be after we accept our Messiah.

**CJB Romans 5:19-6:4** <sup>19</sup> *For just as through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the other man, many will be made righteous.* <sup>20</sup> *And the Torah came into the picture so that the offence would proliferate; but where sin proliferated, grace proliferated even more.* <sup>21</sup> *All this happened so that just as sin ruled by means of death, so also grace might rule through causing people to be considered righteous, so that they might have eternal life, through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord.*

**CJB Romans 6:1-4** <sup>1</sup> *So then, are we to say, "Let's keep on sinning, so that there can be more grace"?* <sup>2</sup> *Heaven forbid! How can we, who have died to sin, still live in it?* <sup>3</sup> *Don't you know that those of us who have been immersed into the Messiah Yeshua have been immersed into his death?* <sup>4</sup> *Through immersion into his death we were buried with him; so that just as, through the glory of the Father, the Messiah was raised from the dead, likewise we too might live a new life.*

Let's read a few more verses in Matthew 12.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW 12:33 - 37**

What we have here is a few verses that form a unified thought and so adhere to a pattern. Remember: this is not being directed to the crowd but rather at the Pharisees and Scribes to whom Yeshua is giving a good dressing down for their corrupt spiritual leadership. He begins by employing a rather common illustration used in His era; that of a fruit tree and the fruit it bears. He does this because the bulk of Jewish people, especially in the Galilee, were country people; they were either farmers or herders. Thus He states the obvious, even logical. And the obvious is: good fruit can come only from a good tree. By a good tree He is meaning something that it is healthy, viable, and pleasant and it is doing what it is supposed to do: bear fruit that is good for eating. Continuing with the obvious and the logical, Yeshua says that if the tree goes bad, so will the fruit become bad. That is, if the tree loses its health to disease or infestation, and therefore becomes unviable, then the fruit it bears necessarily loses its pleasantness and

becomes bitter or rotten. Believe me; the Pharisees and Scribes got the gist that what Christ was saying was a repudiation of them, personally. That is, at first these Pharisees and Scribes were good fruit trees bearing good fruit; but over time they have gone bad (turned wicked), and so the fruit they bear has also gone bad (it has turned wicked).

Next, just to be sure there was no ambiguity, we have Christ exclaim "you snakes!" at these bad fruit trees standing before Him. I imagine it was all rather dramatic and unforeseen to those religious leaders and the crowds of common folk that were following. **"How can you who are evil say anything good?"**, continues Yeshua. Notice how this statement is still tied to the fruit tree illustration. If a religious leader has gone bad (like a fruit tree has gone bad), it is impossible that he can say anything good (because a bad tree can only produce bad fruit). The context and reasons for Christ's barbed criticisms are that He is responding to the Pharisees' and Scribes' false accusations that He did His exorcisms and healings by the power of Satan. Thus Yeshua is saying that to speak slanderous falsehoods (evil things) is to **be** evil. But then again, Yeshua says, why would this be surprising? These bad fruit trees are incapable of bearing anything good. These evil religious leaders are incapable of teaching or preaching anything but falsehoods (evil).

It is important that we take such words with a grain of salt. I think we could say that Yeshua's words were somewhat overstated because He was speaking in the manner of conversation. That is, even the most wicked of the Pharisees and Scribes no doubt held some correct doctrine, and taught some correct things. Christ's strong comment is a push back against them for lying by saying that He was in league with the Devil instead of being in league with God. They were not only slandering the Son of God, and so being deceptive and steering the Jewish people in the wrong direction, but they were also slandering the work of the Holy Spirit that is the power of God on earth to save (blasphemy of the Holy Spirit). They were speaking these evil falsehoods from hearts that had become darkened because they established and held up manmade doctrines (Jewish laws and Traditions of the Elders) as though they were God's Word. And because they were arrogant and prideful, and believed these Jewish common people in the crowd were theirs to teach and to have authority over. Yeshua exposed them for what they were: wolves in sheep's clothing.

**"For the mouth speaks what overflows from the heart"**, says Jesus. That is, the evil things they said about Yeshua getting His power to exorcise demons

from the chief demon were spoken because it reflected the condition of their hearts. Or better, the condition of their corrupted minds.

Still continuing the same flow of thought, verse 35 has Christ saying that the good person brings forth good things from his store of good, but the evil person brings forth evil things from his store of evil. This is but another illustration of the obvious and logical that good produces only good, and evil produces only evil. I don't think I need to flesh this out any further; Christ has made His point. He was using multiple ways of saying the same thing (a habit of His) in order to create emphasis and understanding. He pulled no punches by publicly and explicitly declaring that these particular Synagogue leaders were evil men through and through and so whatever instruction or declaration came from them is evil and ought not be paid attention to or believed. But then comes the devastating bottom line: on Judgment Day they are going to have to give an account to God of what they just accused Yeshua, and as a result what they have just tried to teach the Jewish people that witnessed it all. Something, which if believed, will lead to eternal destruction for those people whom Christ would soon give His life to save. These folks looked to their religious leaders for truth and that is not what they served up. So, says Yeshua, the Father's verdict upon them can only be guilty as charged, and their sentence is the final death on Judgment Day.

What is the source of our words? They come from our thoughts. And what is the source of our thoughts? They come from our minds. Therefore since our words, thoughts, and minds are organically tied together, the nature of who we are (evil or righteous) will be revealed by what comes out of our mouths (our words). Although the topic can be hard to grasp, there has been an ongoing debate throughout history... including among Jews and within the Christian faith... of whether it is our body (our flesh) that is inherently evil that causes us to sin, or it is our will that resides in our mind. Paul addressed this very subject in Romans 7:14 - 25 and it is my view that he never reaches or proposes a firm conclusion. In fact, what he expresses is his exasperation over trying to understand the never ending tug of war between good and evil that is still within him.... even as a passionate Believer in Christ. The earliest Church Fathers struggled at not only understanding what Paul meant in that passage, but what they felt to be true according to their human experience and trust in Messiah. Origen claimed that the problem of evil resided in the mind and not in the flesh. Chrysostom was firm that Paul did not mean to say that the flesh was evil nor did the flesh wage a never ending battle against the mind.

Over my time as a Bible teacher, as God has been kind and full of grace to allow me to continue to grow in understanding, my position on this matter has evolved... or perhaps a better way to say it, my position has become more nuanced... such that I cannot say that our physical bodies are inherently evil. They are certainly corrupted in the sense that the introduction of sin into God's Creation has caused these fleshly vessels to become weak, to deteriorate over time, and eventually die. But our tangible, physical flesh is not where the power of sin and evil reside within us. Rather sin and evil reside in our souls and in our minds... wholly intangible things. Even words (what Christ is currently addressing)... human speech... are intangible things. Words are just as invisible as the thoughts from which they sprang; just as a mind is invisible. One cannot reach out and touch spoken words nor can one reach out and touch thoughts. Yeshua says that our words are what reveals our evil **"for the mouth speaks what overflows from the heart (the mind)."** And that on Judgment Day we will be found innocent or we'll be condemned by God according to our words, because they reflect whether our minds are evil or good (that is, our spiritual condition). Let's pause for a moment. What Yeshua is saying must be taken within a far larger context. He does not mean that words we have said during our lives (our speech) is the sole determining factor that will be used on Judgment Day to determine our eternal future. Let's remember the scene: Yeshua is dealing with a particular matter, with a particular group of Pharisees and Scribes, at a particular moment in time. He is condemning them for giving credit to Satan for the good deed that the power of God's Holy Spirit has done in chasing away a demon from a possessed person. Christ was not speaking the Gospel message of salvation to them. He was not giving these Jewish Leaders a detailed lesson on good and evil, nor how true righteousness is achieved. So His statement that it is our words that will lead to our acquittal or conviction on Judgment Day do not present the entire picture of what will be judged by God.

However... just as we discussed regarding where the line is between slandering the person of Christ (that can be forgiven) versus slandering the Holy Spirit (that can not be forgiven), there is also a line regarding what our spoken words indicate about our inner spiritual condition. To a point, our words can demonstrate mere carelessness of our tongue and perhaps unguarded emotion or passion. But over that line it points to an evil mind and identity as far as God is concerned. Yeshua has just said that these particular Pharisees and Scribes (not all) have been exposed as evil because their words of slander have crossed over that line.

The Church Father Chrysostom had this to say about our words:

***"Do you see how far the Judge is from being vindictive? How favorable the account required? For it is not upon what someone else has spoken of you but from what you have yourself spoken. From this will the Judge give his sentence. This is the fairest of all procedures. It rests wholly with you to speak or not to speak."***

Let's read more of Matthew chapter 12.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW 12:38 - end**

Almost as though sloughing off Yeshua's condemnation of their words, these Pharisees and Scribes (called Torah teachers in the CJB) respond by asking Him for a sign. This is almost comical. One has to ask how, after His astounding series of miracles of various kinds, could they could ask for yet another? The answer is that it is not a miracle, per se, that they are seeking. In fact, it is nothing specific that they are asking for. Rather they are saying that He needs to come up with something (a sign) that is a verification or authentication of who He claims He is. Or perhaps it is to better define who He is. And remember; He has yet to say that He is the Messiah even though His words have become heavier and heavier in their implication that He is divine or at the least is closely associated with the divine... in a Moses-like way. What they are really more disputing is His authority that He openly asserts is greater than theirs. And His publicly stated reasoning for this controversial assertion is because Yeshua says He is Daniel's Son of Man, and therefore God's agent on earth.

So in the minds of Yeshua's opposition, what is a sign? A sign is somewhat like an omen. An omen in the sky (a sign) is what led the Star Gazers from the east to go in search of the newborn king of the Jews (the infant Yeshua). It is also something done that creates an identity or validates a promise. For instance: the sign from God to Noah that never again would the world be destroyed by a flood is the rainbow; something enduring that can be visibly seen. The sign of following Abraham and His God is male circumcision of the flesh; something enduring that is tangibly worn. The sign of following Moses and accepting the Covenant given to Israel on Mt. Sinai is observing the Creation 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath; something enduring that resides in the heart (the mind). Essentially, there is no "sign" that Yeshua could give these particular Jewish religious leaders that they would accept. The single thing I can think of that they would have liked to see is for



Yeshua to announce that He has formed a militia and is going to lead the Jews in rebellion against Rome (since that is what they expected God's Messiah to do).

Yeshua's response to this request for a sign only continues His incredulous denunciation of them. He says: **"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign?"** Then says none will be given. This statement once again stirs up memories of the past of Moses and the Exodus.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Deuteronomy 1:35** *Not a single one of these people, this whole evil generation, will see the good land I swore to give to your ancestors..."*

<sup>CJB</sup> **Deuteronomy 32:5** *"He (God) is not corrupt; the defect is in his children, a crooked and perverted generation."*

And in a later time of Israel's development God speaks similarly through the Prophet Jeremiah.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Jeremiah 3:9** *The ease with which Isra'el prostituted herself defiled the land, as she committed adultery with stones and with logs.*

Most of the Book of Hosea is dedicated to an extensive reproof of Israel that uses marriage, adultery and prostitution to make the same point. The meaning in the Bible each time this thought of generational adultery is rolled out, including what Yeshua is saying against the Synagogue leadership, is that this generation that is being confronted is unfaithful to God. Christ using the term "adulterous" continues the thread throughout the Bible that likens the relationship of God's worshipers to Yehoveh as a marriage. Human marriage is a sacred union with God as the guarantor, and as people of faith we must always keep that in mind (although today the government has intervened, redefined marriage for political purposes, removed it from the realm of the religious, and made it little more than a legalized financial arrangement). Therefore from the biblical sense to be adulterous is to come into union with someone or something other than with whom one is wed. This does not have to be only a sexual union; it can be a union of identity. So in a sense Yeshua has expanded His condemnation to a more broad group of people. He is branding Israel in general as an adulterous and evil generation.

We have to be a little careful with the term "generation"; it is used in different ways in the Bible. In this case it is not referring to the modern technical definition

and use of the term. Rather Jesus means all those who are living at the current time. So it is inclusive of newborns to the extremely elderly. And yet it is by no means a term that means "every last individual". It is a general term that is applied loosely. However, as the Torah so vividly teaches, God evaluates both individuals and entire communities that can range from congregations to nations. That is, He judges both the overall condition of a community, as well the condition of individual members of that community. So an evil and adulterous community by no means indicates that every individual of that community is evil and adulterous. However, should God pour out His wrath on that community, even the righteous individuals that form it are likely to be collateral damage. Therefore in the Book of Revelation we read this bone-chilling warning:

<sup>CJB</sup> **Revelation 18:3-5** <sup>3</sup> *"For all the nations have drunk of the wine of God's fury caused by her whoring- yes, the kings of the earth went whoring with her, and from her unrestrained love of luxury the world's businessmen have grown rich."* <sup>4</sup> *Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues,"* <sup>5</sup> *for her sins are a sticky mass piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.*

Sometimes it seems impossible (or very nearly so) to come out of an evil and adulterous community. However God is warning Israel in particular to leave the nations where they have gone because the nations are about to receive His full fury. This has always been understood to mean that a faithful God worshiper should detach and leave whatever community one is part of if it is evil and adulterous, because even the most faithful will be affected as a consequence of that attachment. In our time, as Believers in Jesus, this perhaps most applies to our congregations and associations. It falls to us to gauge whether the leadership and teaching of our congregational community is true to the Bible, and therefore faithful to God, or if it reflects that congregation's manmade traditions and doctrines that have strayed from biblical ordinance and principle. And if it does, then we have a free-will decision to make: do we follow God's call to us to come out of it? Or do we put social connections, comfort and personal preferences above that?

So in verses 39 and 40, Jesus tells the Pharisees and Scribes that He absolutely will not give them a sign. However: they will witness the sign of Jonah, which was that for 3 days and 3 nights **Yonah** was in the belly of a sea-monster. Therefore Yeshua (the Son of Man) will be 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the earth.



Jonah was sent (quite unwillingly) by God to prophesy to the gentiles of the city of Nineveh. The prophecy was that if they didn't turn from their idolatrous and evil ways, God would destroy them. Jonah didn't want to go because he didn't want Nineveh to be delivered; he would just as soon see them destroyed. Much to his surprise, the leaders of Nineveh listened to Jonah, heeded God's warning, repented, and so God's fury was averted; exactly what God wanted.

What happened to Jonah had never been taken as a "sign" by the Jewish people; but Christ just revealed it as one. Yet the undefined sign the Pharisees demanded will not occur there on the spot, nor will it occur during Yeshua's lifetime. A sign will only happen upon His death and resurrection because His death and resurrection ARE the fulfillment of the sign of Jonah. A few decades later Paul will confirm this as his interpretation of the event.

**CJB Acts 2:22-24 <sup>22</sup> "Men of Isra'el! Listen to this! Yeshua from Natzeret was a man demonstrated to you to have been from God by the powerful works, miracles and signs that God performed through him in your presence. You yourselves know this. <sup>23</sup> This man was arrested in accordance with God's predetermined plan and foreknowledge; and, through the agency of persons not bound by the Torah, you nailed him up on a stake and killed him! <sup>24</sup> "But God has raised him up and freed him from the suffering of death; it was impossible that death could keep its hold on him.**

In my teaching entitled "The Passover Problem Solved" I go into depth about the literal fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy about Himself as the sign of Jonah. Nearly every biblical commentator will go to great lengths to explain away how Jesus didn't actually spend 3 days and nights in the tomb; or some go so far as to virtually redefine days and nights so that it comes out to 3 days and 3 nights. Others merely dismiss it and say it really doesn't matter. Well, it does matter. Otherwise how much else of the New Testament are we to spiritualize and marginalize away or as in this case, to keep manmade Easter doctrines alive. When we understand the Torah and we understand the biblical feasts (of which the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Passover, and Firstfruits were directly involved in the sequence of Yeshua's death and resurrection), then we can see how indeed He was in the tomb for a literal 3 days and 3 nights. You can go to TorahClass.com and insert the words The Passover Problem Solved into the search box and find the teaching.

In verse 41, continuing His promise to fulfill the sign of Jonah, He says that the

people of Nineveh (gentiles who are now God fearing) will stand up at the Judgment (Judgment Day) and they will be witnesses against this (evil) generation as they too stand before the Great Judge. Why? Because these gentiles turned from their sins and wickedness to God (this is the biblical meaning of repentance) when Jonah told them about God and that they had been wrong in their idol worship. That is, the people of Nineveh obeyed the Hebrew principle of ***shema***; they didn't merely passively listen to God's instruction; they heard, believed, and actively carried it out. Luke says virtually the same thing in Luke 11:32.

And by the way: ancient Nineveh is modern Mosul, Iraq. One has to wonder because of the way biblical prophecies are fulfilled, and then repeat (sometimes more than once), if Mosul, Iraq might not eventually become a center of Christ Believing Arabs by the time of the Day of Judgment. While no one can say for certain, I sort of expect it.

Yeshua next says, rather cryptically, that "what is here now is greater than Jonah". He can only be speaking of Himself. In this chapter Christ has made the sign of Jonah as His own sign, and He has made Himself to be the Son of David, which is Solomon, who was seen as a seer and a fountain of Wisdom. Solomon and Jonah were two highly regarded figures within 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism, and Yeshua says He is greater than both. But in another sense He is complaining that while the Pharisees and Scribes accept both Solomon and Jonah as legitimate and highly revered holy men, they don't accept Him even though these two and so many prophets from Israel's past (as well as Moses) spoke about Him. This contrast ties together with the irony that the Jewish Prophet Jonah went to an unfaithful pagan city and the residents listened to his prophecy, repented, and became faithful, but Israel's own prophets went to the people of Israel and they refused God's words and warning. Thus, says Christ, the pagan "Queen of South" will be yet another witness against unfaithful Israel on Judgment Day. This is referring to the pagan Queen of Sheba who, hearing of Solomon's great Wisdom, came to him and spent quite some time learning from him and returned home changed, as a God worshiper. So we can only imagine that despite all Yeshua is saying that is the truth, the Pharisees and Scribes (and soon the majority of Jews in Judea) became livid over Yeshua speaking of the inclusion of gentiles having favor with Yehoveh, God of Israel, without first converting and becoming Jews. The fighting words that Jesus puts forth is that gentiles might even be more accepting of Him than the Jews; which, of course, has turned out to be true.

Verses 43 - 45 are admittedly challenging; so challenging that there are several different interpretations of them. We don't have the time to sort out the several of those that I think are off the mark, so I'll only go with what I conclude Jesus meant. I will add that this is a story that combines parable, metaphor, and scriptural truth. He is also employing a language and terms and illustrations that were understood within the Holy Land in the 1st century, but are very challenging for us to try to reconstruct today. That said, here is what I think the meaning is based upon what we can know with help from the Torah.

The unclean spirits mean evil spirits (demons), and they are generally interchangeable terms. So the illustration or teaching begins with the scenario that through exorcism a demon possessed person is released from its power. The question then becomes: so where does this demon that has been kicked out, go? Back in Matthew chapter 8 we read this:

**CJB Matthew 8:28-32** <sup>28</sup> *When Yeshua arrived at the other side of the lake, in the Gadarenes' territory, there came out of the burial caves two men controlled by demons, so violent that no one dared travel on that road.* <sup>29</sup> *They screamed, "What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"* <sup>30</sup> *Now some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding.* <sup>31</sup> *The demons begged him, "If you are going to drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."* <sup>32</sup> *"All right, go!" he told them. So they came out and went into the pigs, whereupon the entire herd rushed down the hillside into the lake and drowned.*

So to Jesus's way of thinking, and to the demons being driven out of these 2 men, they had to reside and exist somewhere else; that is in some tangible place. Since they were being driven out of humans they were fine with residing in pigs (as not a particularly desired alternative). But in Matthew 12:43 Yeshua explains what happens to a demon when it has no place to reside. It wanders around in a dry country seeking rest (that is, a place to cease wandering and settle down). What is dry country? A desert wilderness.

Jews believed that the Judean desert was the abode of a highly ranked demon named **Az'azel**. This was more than legend; his name and that he lives in the desert wilderness is found in Leviticus.

**CJB Leviticus 16:6-10** <sup>6</sup> *Aharon is to present the bull for the sin offering which is for himself and make atonement for himself and his*

***household. <sup>7</sup> He is to take the two goats and place them before ADONAI at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>8</sup> Then Aharon is to cast lots for the two goats, one lot for ADONAI and the other for 'Az'azel. <sup>9</sup> Aharon is to present the goat whose lot fell to ADONAI and offer it as a sin offering. <sup>10</sup> But the goat whose lot fell to 'Az'azel is to be presented alive to ADONAI to be used for making atonement over it by sending it away into the desert for 'Az'azel.***

What we are reading about in Leviticus is called the Scapegoat ceremony that is associated with Yom Kippur. The name of the desert demon ***Az'azel*** plays a prominent role. It may even be that ***Az'azel*** is yet another name for, or manifestation of, Satan. In the Scapegoat ritual two goats are sacrificed: one goat is killed by throwing it over a cliff and another is sent away into the wilderness, bearing the sins of Israel (it will die there). The idea seems to be to return sin from whence it came; back to sin's author, Satan.

Apparently the dry desert wilderness is where demons who don't reside in some living creature are exiled; and they don't want to be there. So, says Jesus, after wandering around the desert for awhile, the dispossessed unclean spirit determines to return to his former human host. And when he returns, it turns out the space where it lived (the man's spirit or soul) is still vacant. Why is it vacant? Because spiritually speaking, every human, without exception, is going to be inhabited by the spirit of God or by the spirit of Satan. And this formerly demon possessed person, although happy to be rid of the demon, has foolishly not replaced that evil spirit that left his soul with God's spirit; so metaphorically speaking, that space remains vacant. Upon seeing the vacant space that he left some time ago, the demon tells 7 other dispossessed and wandering demons to come join him and take up residence with him. Thus making this formerly possessed, but then exorcised, but now re-possessed person far worse off than he was before because now instead of but 1 this man has 8 demons living in him.

So what's Jesus's point? It can only be a continuation of the condition of the souls, and the destiny of, these particular Scribes and Pharisees He's been chiding. It is that (from Christ's perspective) these fellows must have had an unclean spirit in them at one time, but for some reason it left them. However instead of filling up the vacancy (their soul) with a spirit of good and truth, it was left empty and now they are filled with evil 8 times worse than it was before. And, says Christ, this is how it will be for this evil generation. That is, this evil

generation is not going to get better, it is going to get worse.

The final 5 verses of chapter 12 has Christ redefining what family is. By no means is He disavowing His own mother and brothers. And, by the way, here is one of a few places in which Jesus is said to have biological brothers from his biological mother Mary. However, we cannot get away from the fact that as much of a natural familial bond that Jesus had with His biological family, the bond was even stronger with His spiritual family. So He points to His disciples and says that these are His mother and brothers. Mother and brothers is a dramatic phrase that simply means "family".

Let's look at this another way. The bond Yeshua had with His mother was biological and physical. The bond He had with His actual Father (God) was spiritual. The lesson? Spiritual bonds are tighter than physical bonds. But let us never think this operates only in a positive way. While Yeshua is saying that those who do His Father's will (and within the Father's will is that His Son, Yeshua, is accepted as the Father's agent) become His family resulting from a common spiritual bond with Him, it is also that one can create a spiritual family that is evil in nature by doing Satan's will and thus bonding with Satan.

Notice that while to start this passage He speaks of "who is my mother and who are my brothers", He ends it with "brother and sister and mother". This is important because He makes no distinction according to gender as regards spiritual bonding with Him. Women are as equally welcome to be part of His spiritual family as are males.

We'll begin Matthew chapter 13 next time.