



## **Matthew 12:43–45**

43 “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse

than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

## **Reflection**

You might be excused for taking one look at our passage today and just scratching your head. What on earth is Jesus talking about? Which is a fair question because in these verses Jesus is more speaking about the spiritual realm than the earthly one. Jesus is bringing to a close the whole hostile encounter with the Pharisees that began in Matthew 12:22 when they accused him of working for Satan. And he does so, brilliantly.

You'll remember this all started with Jesus driving out a demon from a man who was both blind and mute. The crowds were

astonished, many of them close to deciding that Jesus was the Messiah. The Pharisees rushed in and said, no, this man's a magician, he's driving out demons by the power of Satan, working on Satan's behalf. Using cold hard logic, Jesus then publically shamed the Jewish religious leaders by showing how absurd it was to claim that Satan could be at war with himself and drive out his own demons. Jesus' final point was made through an illustration, in verse 29,

29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

The strong man is Satan. To cast out his

demons Jesus first has to bind him. That done, he can then cast out his demons.

To bring this whole hostile encounter to its conclusion Jesus now brilliantly returns to this opening illustration to make his final point revealing the spiritual nature of what is going on with this wicked generation.

Jesus begins with the same illustration that he started with to set up his point, only he extends it with horrifying implications.

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As an illustration from life, Jesus could well be describing any one of the people that he has freed from demon possession. Jesus has driven a demon out of them by the power of the Holy Spirit. But unless that person replaces the demon with faith in Jesus, it is more than possible that not only the demon will return, but bring others with him, and that person's final condition end up being much worse than in the beginning.

Jesus then turns his illustration into a fright-

ening indictment of their wicked generation which includes not just the Pharisees and teachers of the law but also the citizens of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum – in fact, in the end, almost everyone that Jesus has ministered to, who all turn against him. Consider the astonishing miracles they'd witnessed and the preaching they'd heard and yet in the end, with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law whipping them into a frenzy, almost everyone hands Jesus over to be crucified. Here's a picture from Matthew 27 of this wicked generation:

22 “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked. They all answered, “Crucify him!”

23 “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

25 All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”

They did this to the man who dedicated the final three years of his life, night and day, to healing their sick, cleansing their lepers, bringing their children back to life, casting demons out of their brothers and

sisters, making their lame walk, making those born blind amongst them see, caring for their poor; and in between teaching them the words of God with a power and authority the likes of which they'd never seen.

Their final condition will be worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation. This is Jesus' frightening indictment, he's prophesying, he's condemning them because he knows their future. Jesus came amongst them and through his ministry figuratively 'drove out their demon', but they failed to replace their demon with faith in him. Their house was swept clean by him, but it was not filled again by them with repentance and faith in. And so there was plenty of room for that demon to return with vengeance, but



not just him, seven more as well. That's what will happen to this wicked generation when Jesus departs the earth. Their final condition will be worse than their first because they did not respond to Jesus in repentance and faith.

The most chilling dimension of this passage is that through it Jesus gives us an impression of the spiritual warfare that is taking place during his ministry. Satan is throwing everything at him. Even now, unbeknownst to the Pharisees and teachers of the law, they are Satan's pawns, doing the work of Satan as they accuse Jesus, and plot to have him killed. During his ministry on earth, Jesus holds Satan at bay, but when Jesus leaves, Satan's demons come in and devour the entire generation. On the Judgment Day it will be better for

Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah than for them. They had their chance to respond to Jesus, free will to come to him in repentance and faith, but they chose sin, and that was the only opening the devil needed.

## **Think**

The horror contained in this passage gives us a new dimension in which to appreciate the cross of Christ. Satan, his demons, the religious leaders, Jews and Gentiles alike – all in league against Jesus. One man against both the sin-corrupted earthly and spiritual realms. Yet this isn't just any man. You see in this one man all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were cre-

ated through him and for him, and in him all things hold together. In everything Jesus has the supremacy. And so this tide of evil, this flood of earthly and spiritual evil that is threatening to rise up and overwhelm him, is nothing to the one who walks on water and calms storms with a word – who right now is holding the very universe into being by his powerful word. In fact, this is going exactly according to Jesus' plan. He'll turn what they meant for evil into good and their wickedness into judgment. Their evil resulted in Jesus' death and resurrection, great good, hope for their hopeless world and exactly according to his plan. But it also will mean fiery judgment for their wicked generation.

**Pray**

I don't know about you but after this passage I just need to pray. I'm not sure how it has affected you. Take what time you need now to consider it again, and then please, again today, pray with me for our generation.