
a *Grace Notes* course

Life of Christ 300

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Lesson 302

Life of Christ 302

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Matthew 12:22-37. “

Then a man, demonically blind and mute, was brought to Him, and He healed him, so the mute spoke and saw.

And all the crowds were thunderstruck and were saying, “This man is not the son of David, is He?”

And the Pharisees after hearing [this] said, “This man does not cast out the demons except by Beelzebub ruler of the demons.”

And after knowing their inward fuming He said to them, “Every kingdom after being divided against itself is laid waste and every city or house after being divided against itself will not stand.

And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; therefore how will his kingdom stand?

And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast out? For this reason they will be your judges.

But if by the Spirit of God I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Or how is someone able to enter into the house of the strong man and steal his vessel unless first he binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

The one who is not with Me is against Me, and the one who does not gather with me scatters.

For this reason I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

And whoever says a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the one coming.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known from the fruit.

Brood of vipers, how are you being evil able to speak good? For from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

The good man casts out good from the good treasure, and the evil man casts out evil from the evil treasure.

But I say to you that every useless word which men speak they will pay back concerning the word of it in the day of judgment;

for from your words you will be justified, and from your words you will be condemned.”

Mark 3:20-30. And He came into a house; and the crowd came together again, so that it is not possible for them to even eat bread.

And after hearing they went out from His side to seize it [bread]. For they were saying that it was amazing.

And the Scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying that He has Beelzebub and that He casts out demons by the ruler of demons.

And summoning them He spoke to them in parables, “How is Satan to cast out Satan?”

And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom will not stand.

And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

And if Satan strives against himself and is divided, he will not be able to stand but he has an end.

But no one is able, entering into the house of a strong man, to steal his vessels, unless first he binds the strong man, and then he plunders his house.

Truly I say to you that every sin will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they blaspheme;

but whoever might blaspheme unto the Holy Spirit, he does not have forgiveness ever, but is guilty of eternal sin.

Because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

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II. Exposition.

The Setting

This incident occurred during Christ's itinerant ministry in Galilee, which is portrayed so well in Luke 8:1-3.

He is evangelizing and preaching the kingdom of God, the twelve going around to the cities and

villages with Him, and the women's auxiliary taking care of logistics.

In one of those villages, in a home, this took place.

Of course, crowds are following Him, hoping for a miracle, healing, or exorcism - and a few hoping for more teaching on the kingdom.

And Christ comes to a house, and there the crowd gathers again. In fact it becomes so crowded that they are not able to eat bread.

Literally, 'It is not possible for them to eat bread.'

Mark portrays this with the dramatic present tense of the verb DUNAMAI. By doing so, he draws his readers in, as though they were part of the story, witnessing the events with him.

We would say something like, 'They are packed into the house like sardines.'

The healing, Matthew 12:22.

While Christ and the crowd occupy this house, a man who is demonically blind and mute was brought to him.

Matthew employs the phrase
DAIMONIZOMENOS TUPHLOS KAI
KOPHOS.

(1) The participle DAIMONIZOMENOS acts just like an adjective here, modifying TUPHLOS 'blind' and KOPHOS 'mute.'

(2) So it wasn't that the man was just blind and mute, but that he had that affliction because he was demon possessed.

The demon who occupied his soul made it so that he could neither see nor speak.

(1) Umm, it was not that the demon himself was blind and mute, but rather that he caused the state.

(2) A disembodied spirit cannot suffer from afflictions which are endemic to the corporeal realm.

(3) It is reasonable to note that demons may cause bodily afflictions and illnesses. And it may even be that they can do so without possessing the body.

In the ancient world the line of distinction between deaf and mute was often blurred. There was very little done for those who could not hear, and so impaired speech was the norm for the deaf.

Now Christ healed the man. It does not say that Christ cast out the demon, but rather that He healed the man.

This makes it seem like the man's affliction was not a case of possession, but rather of affliction.

So now there are three things that can happen to a person as result of demon activity:

- (1) They can receive demon affliction in the form of some physical ailment.
- (2) They can receive demon influence in the form of false doctrine.
- (3) They can become demon possessed, and relinquish control of their body to demonic control.

And Christ simply heals the man, so that the affliction is gone.

The response of the crowd, Mark 3:21 and Matthew 12:23.

A must be said here about the harmony of these two gospel accounts.

Mark portrays the crowd as hearing Christ; there is no reference at all to a healing from a demonic affliction.

Matthew gives the reason for the crowd's amazement and Mark does not. That is why translators have found it difficult to translate Mark, and they usually get it wrong.

It is only by harmonizing the two passages that Mark's gospel becomes easier to translate.

Mark sets it up this way: the crowd was packed into a house so that they could not eat bread; after hearing [Christ] they went out to seize bread, for they were so amazed.

The aorist participle AKOUSANTES demonstrates that the action of hearing took place before the action of the main verb EXELTHON, 'they went out.' So first they heard or at least eyewitnesses the healing, and then they left the house.

Now this is more than a little funny, because it represents the attitude of the crowd toward Christ's ministry.

The phrase HOI PAR' AUTOU EXELTHON KRATESAI AUTON is often mistranslated.

(1) You can see why. Mark gives so little detail about the event; only by reading Matthew do we know what really happened in the house.

(2) Furthermore, Mark is somewhat ambiguous with his pronouns, so that it is difficult to tell to what AUTOU and AUTON refer.

(3) The first part is a little easier, thanks to the preposition PARA. This preposition is a people preposition - it generally denotes proximity to a person. If Mark had wanted to portray departure from a place, like a house, he would have more naturally employed EK.

(4) So it is 'They went out from his side...'

(5) But the next part, KRATESAI AUTON encounters difficulty.

(a) The translation of the aorist infinitive verb is not so difficult; it describes the intent of the crowd: 'in order to seize.' The aorist tense portrays their immediate and urgent intent to seize something.

(b) The object of the verb is again a personal pronoun. Here is the difficulty:

(c) The pronoun in the Greek will most often go back to the nearest antecedent that matches in gender and number.

(d) This particular form may be either the masculine gender or the neuter gender.

(e) If it is masculine, its antecedent is the first personal pronoun in the sentence, AUTOU; if it is neuter, its antecedent is bread, and so should be translated, 'it.'

(6) Amusingly enough, they were packed in so tight they could not eat bread, and when they had heard Christ, they could not wait to leave, so anxious were they to eat.

(7) The aorist infinitive KRATESAI portrays this ravenous crowd with perfection. KRATESAI means to overpower someone or something; the aorist tense adds a sense of urgency to the action.

(8) So here is a Greek idiom on ravenous hunger; and the crowds are ready to get food even if they have to kill it themselves.

Mark explains further, ELEGON GAR HOTI EXESTE.

- (1) The translation is 'For they were saying that it is amazing.
- (2) The verb EXISTEMI is without a direct object, it is translated 'amazed,' or even 'crazy.'
- (3) Since the subject of the verb is not expressed apart from the verbal form, it can be 'he,' 'she,' or 'it.' And the translator just has to make us his mind which one it is.
- (4) From the gospel of Matthew it is abundantly clear that the crowds were amazed, and not Christ. Again the harmony saves us from ambiguity and mistranslation.
- (5) The conjunction GAR makes it clear that this is an explanation on the behavior of the crowd in going out to seize the bread.
- (6) The imperfect tense of the verb ELEGON depicts a continuous past action - they kept on saying that 'it is amazing.'
- (7) So this is kind of the funny part: what they saw was so amazing that they became famished and ravenously hungry.
- (8) And this is certainly within the bounds of the common experience of man; you go to see a great movie, an action movie, and you come out hungry because the protagonist has been through so much, and it is a vicarious experience for you.
- (9) Perhaps this little passage give us more insight on what it was like to be an eyewitness to the life of Christ. It was amazing. It would knock your socks clean off. You would walk out of there ravenously hungry, it was so great.

Matthew explains the response of the crowd a little differently.

He employs the same verb, EXISTEMI, to describe their mental and emotional state.

- (1) This verb means to stand outside oneself. It is equivalent of our own ecstatic.
- (2) They were knocked out - thunderstruck at what had occurred. Perhaps many of the people knew this man who had been blind and mute. That would certainly add to their amazement.

But Matthew concentrates not on their desire to eat bread; rather, on what words they spoke about Christ.

Matthew uses a particle that expresses doubt - one that admits a very small chance that something is true. It is the particle METI.

- (1) It was the same particle employed by the Samaritan woman of John chapter four, when she says to her fellow townspeople, 'This man is not the Messiah, is He?'
- (2) So these people indicate that they see with their own eyes certain miraculous acts that would point out Christ as the Son of David, that is, the Messiah.
- (3) But they just cannot believe that Christ is the man. He is not a 'believable' Messiah to them.
- (4) Part of this believability factor was predicted in Isaiah 53:2: "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
- (5) As we would say, he just doesn't look presidential, or messianic.
- (6) Neither were His teachings what they expected. The teachings disappointed, because they were not in line with their desires.
- (7) So instead of saying, these miracles are amazing, Jesus has to be the Messiah - they are saying He doesn't look or teach like our idea of the Messiah, so He cannot be.

The term Son of David comes from the Messianic prophecy that is the Davidic covenant.

- (1) The original citation of the covenant is in 2 Samuel 7:8-17; it is reiterated in Psalm 89:19-37.

- (2) The people of Israel would have known these passages well, but again they are interpreting not according to objectivity, but according to desire.

The response of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 12:24 and Mark 3:22.

The Pharisees and Scribes had come down from Jerusalem in order to 'check out' Jesus.

They had their own interpretation of the event ready for the people to digest. They were always telling the lesser people of the nation how to think; always giving their 'spin' on what Christ was doing.

Since Christ has just been so hard on Simon the Pharisee, it stands to reason that they would be in

the vindictive mode, and looking to discredit Him in a big way.

This outrageous lie is to say the worst about Christ.

According to Mark, they implicated Him as being demon-possessed by Beelzebub, and for that reason he had the ability to cast out demons.

This name means "Lord of the heavenly dwelling." He is an archon mentioned by name in Matthew 10:25; 12:24-27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15-19.

This demon is an archon in heaven, and he is likely to be Satan's current lieutenant.

By getting the people to conclude that Christ is the personification of evil, they hope that all ties to Him will be severed, and the people will return to them as their source of truth.

For in that respect is power, and that is what the Pharisees truly desire.

Christ's reply, Matthew 12:25-32 and Mark 3:23-29.

Christ's insight and summons, Matthew 12:25a and Mark 3:23a.

Christ knew the inward fuming of the Pharisees and Scribes.

(1) The aorist participle EIDOS communicates that Christ came to a firm conclusion about the thinking of the legalistic Jewish leadership present.

(2) ENTHUMEISES describes the inward mental and emotional state of the Jewish leadership.

(a) This is an emotional word; the original word THUMEIO described the smoking of incense.

(b) This is the word that described Joseph's inward fuming when he found out that Mary was pregnant.

(c) It usually has the negative idea of slowly smoldering anger, but can also give the depiction of the germination of an idea.

(d) Here of course it is the inward fuming of the Pharisees at Christ's success, and their scheming to destroy Him as well. Therefore the word fits both ways.

(3) Christ knew their inward fuming. How did He know? Was it miraculous in some way?

(a) Probably not here; the thoughts of the Pharisees were manifest in their actions.

(b) So from their actions in maligning Christ, our Lord has come to a conclusion about their inward thought life.

And as a result, He summoned them.

- Christ is again going to employ the parable to communicate truth.
- He does not do it in a demeaning or condescending or patronizing way. It is the hope of Christ that He can turn their way of thinking.
- Notice especially that Christ summoned them and spoke to them exclusively. He does not point out their error in front of the crowd.
- He is giving them every opportunity to listen to what He has to say, so that they might respond and join Him in His kingdom.
- What in the world, Christ knows He is going to the cross for these Pharisees just as much as He is going to die for anyone.
- So He gives them a great opportunity to believe, and the personal parable is just the way to do that.

The parables of division, kingdom, city, and house, Matthew 12:25b-28 and Mark 3:23b-26.

The parables.

(1) First there comes a question: Satan is not able to cast out Satan, is he?

(a) The question expects a no answer... it is a rhetorical question designed to stimulate thought, so that the listeners will reach the same conclusion as the speaker.

(b) If someone reaches that same conclusion by thought, then it is more to their benefit. Again this is Christ giving his listeners every good opportunity to believe.

(2) Then follow the illustrations.

(a) The kingdom divided against itself is laid waste. This is the nation under the civil war.

- (b) Every Jew would be familiar with this...
- (c) In 1 Kings 11, there is the chronicle of the division of the nation of Israel.
- (d) Jeroboam had rebelled against Solomon because when he rebuilt the Millo, a crucial kink in the armor of Jerusalem, the forced labor was considered too hard.
- (e) Solomon had observed that Jeroboam was an industrious type, and he appointed him foreman over the work, but Jeroboam left.
- (f) As he left he encountered the prophet Ahijah, who foretold of his rule over the ten northern tribes.
- (g) Israel had left Yahweh for the gods of Gentile nations, and part of the discipline would be the division of the nation.
- (h) The southern tribe of Judah would be left with Jerusalem as God's expression of faithfulness to the Davidic covenant, while the rest would go with Jeroboam.
- (i) There is also the promise of an enduring house like David's if Jeroboam and his division remained faithful. Solomon sought the life of Jeroboam for his threat to the unified kingdom. Solomon died before he succeeded in this endeavor.
- (j) The twelfth chapter contains high drama. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, gathers the nation at Shechem for what he expects will be his coronation.
- (k) Here is a narrative of verses four through fifteen: the people request of Rehoboam relief from their heavy labors in the reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall; they make their service to him conditional - relief or rebellion; Rehoboam tells them to return in three days, and in the mean time takes counsel; the elders of the counsel take the conciliatory view, and advise Rehoboam to settle with his people; unfortunately, his fiery young peers take the opposite view and advise the king to add weight to the already heavy yoke; he accepts their view and answers harshly -
- (l) "My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." The word of the prophet Ahijah had been established.

(m) The response of the people of the ten northern tribes is equal to the draconian measures of king Rehoboam. Verse sixteen says, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!"

- (3) The second is the parable of the city - Christ simply communicates that the same principle applies on a smaller model.
- (4) The third is the parable of the house, and so the principle applies at every level of size. Family, city, or kingdom cannot stand when divided.
- (a) The family divides at the parental level.
- (b) Cities and nations divide for various reasons.
- (5) These parables communicate the principle of unity.
- (a) Unity of world view.
- (b) Unity of mission.
- (c) Unity of command.

The conclusions. "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; therefore how will his kingdom stand? But if he strives against himself, he has an end. And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if by the Spirit of God I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

- (1) Christ's conclusion begins with Satan himself; here, the use of Satan denotes his cosmic kingdom and any part of it.
- (a) The general principles given apply in the cosmic system and kingdom; they are universal principles.
- (b) The satanic kingdom would destroy itself from infighting.
- (c) Rather, the satanic kingdom is well-organized and unified. And it wants to destroy your relationship with God.
- (d) For if he strives against himself, he has an end, and any Jew with first grade Jewish history would certainly know this fact.
- (2) Furthermore, Christ turns the tables on the Jewish leaders. Apparently, their sons were casting out demons.

- (a) The reference to sons here probably is as simple as possible - Christ means the Jews of that generation.
- (b) But these sons also claimed to be casting out demons.
- (c) You see, if Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God was casting out demons using the authority of Beelzebub, then a lesser person would use what or whom?
- (d) The idea is that if Christ must use Beelzebub, then someone less could hardly cast out a demon at all.
- (3) Christ explains that their sons will judge them.
- (a) The future tense verb *ESONTAI* makes it real clear that the judgment is not now but future.
- (b) In the biblical doctrine of judgments, there is only one future case where human beings judge others, and that is the judgment of church age believers in the millennium. During that period of time, church age believers in resurrection bodies will rule together with Jesus Christ over the human occupants of planet earth.
- (c) But these sons of Pharisees do not fit that judgment well at all, so this narrows our focus.
- (d) It is not an eschatological judgment, but rather a judgment of a more practical kind: their degeneracy will stand as a judgment over their father's beliefs.
- (e) The generation to which Christ refers is the generation that will engage in armed rebellion against Rome, and subsequently receive destruction.
- (f) Principle: your children will render judgment on your life; they will either become a vindication or condemnation of everything that you are as parents.
- (g) And this generation of Pharisees and Scribes and common people were terrible parents, because they had an awful philosophical foundation.
- (4) Christ's final principle is a sort of warning:
- (a) If Christ does cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon them.

- (b) Note the preservation of the doctrine of Kenosis - Christ casts out demons not on His own authority, but on the authority of the Holy Spirit.
- (c) This is a Greek first class conditional sentence. It prompts the reader or listener to assume the protasis for the sake of argument.
- The protasis is the first half of a conditional sentence - that half which contains the word 'if...'
 - So Christ says "If by the Spirit of God I cast out the demons (and why don't you assume this is true for the sake of argument?)."
- (d) The apodosis contains the warning: 'then the kingdom of God has come upon you.'
- The apodosis is the second half of the condition, or the 'then' clause.
 - Christ makes a logical conclusion - that exorcism by means of the spirit of God is a sign of the kingdom.
 - The exorcisms that Christ performed were for more than compassionate reasons; they were kingdom signs.
 - Christ is indeed demonstrating that He is the Son of David. There is something that I failed to mention when we undertook the Messianic potential of Christ previously in this passage.
- Here is the record of the only exorcism in the Old Testament;
- 1 Samuel 16:14-23.** Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit terrorized him.
- Saul's servants then said to him, 'Behold now, and evil spirit from God is terrorizing you.
- Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well.'
- So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring him to me.'
- The one of the young men said, 'Behold, I have seen son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor,

a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the Lord is with him.'

So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me your son David who is with the flock.'

Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son.

Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer.

Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.'

So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him."

- So David is the only Old Testament believer who exorcised demons, and he did it by means of music and the Spirit of God.

- So Christ now reasons that if by the Spirit of God He is casting out demons, then the kingdom must be upon them, and He Himself must be the Son of David, the Messiah.

The parable of the house of the strong man, Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27

"Or how is someone able to enter into the house of the strong man and steal his vessel unless first he binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

This begins with the alternative conjunction E. This demonstrates that this parable is intended as another explanation of why Christ could not possibly be casting out demons by the authority of Beelzebub.

The interpretation of this parable is less obvious, so we should identify the elements and try to match them to the situation at hand.

- (1) The first element is TIS - 'someone' from the original Greek.
- (2) The second element is OIKIA - the house.
- (3) The third element is ISCHUROU, the strong man.

(4) And the fourth element is SKEUE, the vessel belonging to the strong man. The clay vessel or jar in the house was where the valuables are kept.

Now the 'someone' intends to EISELTHEIN, 'enter' the house of the strong man, in order to HARPASAI, 'steal.' the vessel.

But it is necessary for that someone to DESE, to 'bind' the strong man first, before he can perpetrate the theft.

Now let's assign the elements.

- (1) The house is the house of the human body, a receptacle for the soul.
- (2) The strong man is the demon who occupies the house, possessing the body of the individual.
- (3) The theft of the valuables in the vessel is the recovery of the man's sight and hearing and speech - things precious to any soul.
- (4) But first, Christ must bind the demon. And in order to bind a strong man, you must be stronger than him.

And so here is the companion to the previous parable. If you are not a demon, you at least must be stronger than a demon in order to cast one out.

- (1) The two parables work together so that it is quite lucid that Christ is the Messiah.
- (2) If Christ is not Beelzebub, or at least exorcising by means of demonic authority, then indeed He must have some fantastic strength in the spiritual realm, because demons are bad.

The principle of enemyship, Matthew 12:30. "The one who is not with me is against Me, and the one who does not gather with me scatters."

Christ now turns the tables on the Pharisees with this principle, and it is kind of a scary deal.

This verse assumes the great spiritual strength of Christ, and of course if indeed He is so strong, then you would naturally want Him on your side.

But Christ turns the tables, because the Pharisees must understand a principle if they are going to follow Him.

But if you are not with Christ, then you are His enemy. And if you are the enemy of Christ, the one who has power over demons, then you just might be in a heap of trouble!

Christ is not one that you want as an enemy at all. And yes, Christ does put things in such tough terms.

Furthermore, if you are not on Christ's team, gathering the flock into the kingdom, then you are one who scatters. In other words, you are working against God.

There is certainly no such thing as neutral ground in the angelic conflict. There is no Switzerland.

If you do nothing, then Christ is your enemy; if you do nothing, then you are counterproductive to Christ's aim.

Although the gathering and scattering have to do with the dispensation of the kingdom, there are equal applications in this church age dispensation as well.

(1) If you are not growing, you are regressing.

(2) If you are not producing, you are counter-producing.

This verse calls to mind another passage, Revelation 3:15-16, "(15) I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth."

The lukewarm believer is the distracted believer:

(1) There are many distractions in life; none are worth the loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

Revelation 3:11, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

2 Timothy 2:4-5, No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."

Philippians 3:12-14, Not that I have already obtained it or have already become

perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Deuteronomy 8:3, "...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."

(2) Distractions in life may include the following:

(a) Society and recreation.

(b) Your children and their activities.

(c) Your employment.

(d) The lust pattern of your soul.

(e) Your past.

(f) Marital status.

(g) Monetary problems - too much and too little.

(h) Christian service. Christian service is easier to do than fulfill the plan of God; it is often confused with the plan of God. Therefore many believers become distracted with Christian service and crusader arrogance.

(i) People tests, including:

· Hypersensitivity on your part and the part of others.

· Role model arrogance and iconoclastic arrogance.

· Rejection by others.

· Gossip.

· Unfair authority.

· Racism.

(j) The emotional complex of sins: fear, worry, hatred, guilt, self-pity.

(k) Your health.

(3) Negative volition is the essence of distraction.

- (a) You will often receive temptation to become distracted from the plan of God.
- (b) Distraction is one of two basic expressions of negative volition. It is a basic form of dishonesty toward your spiritual needs.
- (c) The fact of the matter is that you need the word of truth in your life every day; you need to pray and apply doctrine to God every day.
- (d) And very little else!!!

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:28-29. "For this reason I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the one coming."

If a sin is not forgiven, then that means eternal separation from God. This is the ultimate of all serious matters. If a sin is not forgiven, then that means eternity in the Lake of Fire.

And here in this passage we have the unforgivable sin.

The Pharisees in this incident are slandering a ministry of the Holy Spirit; the exorcisms were accomplished solely by the power of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the exorcisms were a part of the presentation of the kingdom by Christ - they are evangelism signs.

This particular blasphemy against the Holy Spirit could only come during the incarnation and the period of the kingdom offer; this is because the kingdom signs were withdrawn after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD

So slandering or blaspheming these works of the Spirit is in reality a rejection of the common grace ministry of the Spirit. See the Doctrine of Common Grace.

PASA HAMARTIA KAI BLASPHEMIA is quite comprehensive; the adjective is universal.

The future passive indicative APHETHESETAI focuses on the judgment at the Great White Throne, and the opening of the books of life and works.

(1) Every person's name is written in the book of life; if they refuse to believe in Christ throughout their lives it is erased.

(2) At this juncture, the book of works is opened, and they are judged according to the works they substituted for the cross.

(3) The passive voice indicates that the subject of the verb receives the action. So every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, because every last one was imputed to Christ on the cross, and He paid for them.

(4) Personal sin is not the issue in eternal salvation; how could God condemn us for anything for which He has condemned His own Son? It would be like saying that a previous judgment is null and void; it would be like saying the work of Christ on the cross was not good enough.

(5) John 3:18,36, "(18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God... (36) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

(6) Personal sin is a fellowship issue, but not a salvation issue. When you commit a personal sin after you have believed in Christ, you get out of fellowship with God; only by confession are you restored to fellowship.

(7) Therefore only one sin can be judged at the Great White Throne; the ultimate arrogance of the rejection of Christ's work on the cross.

The second half of verse thirty-one tells of that one sin. The blasphemy of the Spirit.

(1) BLASPHEMIA represent a slander or defamation of divine character.

(2) God the Holy Spirit had been giving Christ the power to cast out demons. The Pharisees were saying that this had been accomplished by the devil, or at least one of his lieutenants. So they were blaspheming against the Spirit.

(3) Since this ministry of the Spirit was designed for evangelism, defaming it was tantamount to the rejection of the gospel.

(4) Rejection of the Gospel is ultimate arrogance. It blasphemes the precious price paid at the cross.

(5) But next is even more of an enigma.

“And whoever speaks against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Spirit of Holiness, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in the coming one.”

(1) Speaking, and we assume even blaspheming against the Son of Man is a forgivable sin!?!)

(2) But not against the Holy Spirit, not now, not ever.

(3) Now this does not mean that Christ is no longer the only way to salvation; He is still the way, the truth, and the life.

(4) But notice the phrase ‘Son of Man.’ This is a messianic term, and it has to do with the fact that Christ is indeed the Messiah.

(a) The Son of Man is a prophetic term, a reference to Christ's relationship with Adam.

(b) It occurs 107 times in the Old Testament, but only fourteen times outside of Ezekiel. In those cases outside of Ezekiel, it is almost universally an idiom for 'human being'. But in one instance in Daniel, it most certainly refers to Adam himself. The one time that it is used in the singular in Daniel is 7:13, and this is the reference for the popular term in New Testament times.

(c) Daniel 7:13-14, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Adam was coming. And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

· The 'Ancient of Days' is an Aramaic title that refers to God the Father as judge of Jesus Christ. Daniel 7:7-22 is the only instance of this title for God the Father. It concentrates on his eternal nature, and His authority over the other two members of the Godhead.

· God would judge the sins of mankind in the Son of Adam on the cross.

· God gave two evaluations of His Son during the incarnation - 'This is my Son, whom I love, in whom I am well-pleased.' Once at His baptism, and once at the transfiguration.

· The picture presented in Daniel's vision is the transfer of authority from God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son. This transfer of authority occurred in heaven most likely immediately before the incarnation. This is something of a Christmas story from Daniel. It is a revelation of the moments before the incarnation of Christ, the sad/glad going away ceremony for the Son. From that moment forward God the Son would never be the same. He would become the God man, and though His deity did not change, His status did. This is the moment when Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes, and the independent expression of His divine character. This moment was somewhat akin to taking a military oath.

· The earthly transfer of authority took place at Christ's baptism.

(d) The term 'the Son of Man' describes here Christ's relationship to the first man, Adam.

· Adam was the ruler of this world, but gave over his authority to Satan when he sinned.

· So the millennial authority of Christ as King of kings and Lord of Lords corresponds exactly to this.

· This is Messianic authority that concentrates on the ruling but not atoning aspect of Jesus Christ.

· Christ as the last Adam would certainly atone for the sins of the world, begun with Adam, but the concentration is still on authority.

· Although some would complain that the two are inseparable, Christ does that very thing here.

(5) Now Christ has separated His role as the King of kings and Lord of lords from His atoning death.

(6) He is in effect saying that there is no belief requirement related to His kingship - whether over Israel or over the whole world.

(7) And this is entirely proper for one who concentrates first on salvation, and that is the mission of Christ. Remember, He is evangelizing people into His kingdom - that is His mission in the context of this passage.

(8) Christ does not want to make an issue out of his status as the Son of Man. He is certainly making an issue out of His status as the savior of the world. And that is entirely appropriate.

(9) So here are the direct words of Christ that you certainly do not have to accept Him as Lord in order to be saved.

(10) And this points out a strategy in evangelism.

(a) Once again our evangelism strategy must target issues that receive the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

(b) Behavior is not an issue with reference to the gospel; belief is.

(c) To make behavioral change a part of the gospel is to stray from the issue, which is the work of the cross vs. human works.

(d) The only repentance that comes at gospel hearing should have to do with the work of Jesus Christ.

(e) Behavior is a post-salvation issue, and even a moral issue outside of the realm of spirituality.

(f) But Christ died for our sinful behavior, so that it cannot possibly be a criteria for salvation. Rather, one sin, the unforgivable sin, is at issue.

The reason for Christ's reply, Mark 3:30.

“Because they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”

And Christ has formed this reply, including the parables and the principles, as a response to the accusation that He has an unclean spirit.

The imperfect tense of LEGO indicates that this was a repeated accusation, and not just a single incident which occurred here.

The picture is that as Christ goes around performing miracles, healings, and exorcisms, the Pharisees and Scribes follow Him, defaming these validating acts from the Holy Spirit.

Christ comes with this reply especially because those words of defamation affect the gospel.

Of course the personal and inner effect is the worst of all - it causes the final judgment to the Lake of Fire.

Principles of the spoken word, Matthew 12:33-37. (cf. Mute) “‘Either make the tree good and its fruit

good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known from the fruit. Brood of vipers, how are you being evil able to speak good? For from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man casts out good from the good treasure, and the evil man casts out evil from the evil treasure. But I say to you that every useless word which men speak they will pay back concerning the word of it in the day of judgment; for from your words you will be justified, and from your words you will be condemned.’”

The tree and its fruit, v.33.

This is a twist on the old proverb, ‘You will know the tree by its fruit.’ This is more direct.

The aorist imperative command POIESATE demands that the listeners implement this order immediately.

This denotes an ability to make the tree of your life good by means of your free will. You can make your own tree good, so that it produces good fruit.

So instead of an outside observation, this one gets inside the individual life.

Let's very briefly take up the analogy of the tree for spiritual life.

(1) By ‘making’ a tree good, everything comes down to where you plant it.

(2) The tree of your spiritual life needs water, soil, and sun.

(3) But you see, YOU make this tree grow, YOU are responsible.

(a) So you must pick a good site with lots of sunshine.

(b) You must plant this tree in good and well-watered soil.

(4) The location of the tree is analogous to exposure to Bible doctrine.

(5) The fruit is made good by pruning and harvesting.

(a) God does the pruning through divine discipline, although we must have a positive volitional response to that activity on the part of God.

(b) God makes the harvest as well, guiding us by the Spirit into productive opportunities.

There are two kinds of fruit in the spiritual life:

- (1) Your testimony in the angelic conflict;
- (2) Your Christian service (see doctrine of Christian Service).

The abundance of the heart, v.34.

The phrase GENNEMATA ECHIDNON is especially abrasive. Brood or offspring of vipers is certainly not intended as a complement.

- (1) But this is not an idle remark, either. It has a certain accuracy to it that goes beyond that ad hominem kind of retort.
- (2) The ECHIDNA is a poisonous snake. Its venom can kill you. The Scribes and Pharisees are the offspring of vipers.
- (3) They are the offspring of vipers not in a reference to Satan, the serpent and dragon of old, but in reference to the real vipers of the world. Christ is making a metaphor, and that is it.
- (4) So a viper is poisonous and can kill you; the poison of the Pharisee is false doctrine, and it can kill you in the temporal and spiritual sense.

Christ next points out an impossibility. That if you are evil, you are not able to speak good.

- (1) Two words stand in opposition to one another here: AGATHA and PONEROI.
 - (a) The former represents good of an intrinsic kind, and in this context even a good that can only be produced spiritually. Because it is related to the spoken word, it is truth itself.
 - (b) The latter represents evil and falsehood.
- (2) Christ comes right out and calls the Pharisees and Scribes evil. And since they are evil, they have an inability to speak the truth.

The abundance of the heart is EK TOU PERISSEUMATOS TES KARDIAS.

- (1) The heart or mind overflows into the mouth. What you say is simply an expression of who you are.
- (2) So the heart is like a spring of water welling up deep from underground, and the mouth expresses itself like the outflow from that spring. If the

spring is alkaline, then the outflow will be nothing less.

- (3) If the spring is pure, sweet water, then the outflow will be fantastic.

The treasury, v.35.

This verse stands as an explanation of the principle that Christ has just given.

The good man casts out good from the good treasure; the evil man casts out evil from the evil treasure.

- (1) The Greek verb EKBALLEI is 'cast out.' It is meant as a paranomasia or play on words by Christ.
- (2) It is a synonym for exorcism. So that, if Christ is good, He exorcises from good.
- (3) This stands as a clever refutation of the Pharisees' assertion of Christ casting out demons by Beelzebub. It also doubles as a general principle for all expression in life.

Again AGATHOS and PONEROS stand in opposition to one another, this time with a triple dose. Christ draws distinct battle lines between Himself and the Jewish legalists present.

The treasury of the heart is the sum total of information in the mentality and conscience.

- (1) See Matthew 6:19-21 exegesis, from the Life of Christ series.
- (2) Proverbs 10:20, "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, the heart of the wicked is cheap."
- (3) The conscience and mentality are filled with whatever you put there. If you fill them with truth, then you will have a treasury of good things.
- (4) You are therefore defined as good if you fill your heart with good things; this concentrates purely at the intake stage of spiritual growth.
- (5) And if you fill your heart with bad things, then you are bad.

And this view takes into account an encompassing view of your life and especially of your intake.

- (1) There are 23 hours in the day when you do not take in the truth; what is the nature of that time?
- (2) Is it spent in gossip? 'Modern' literature? Watching soap operas? Listening to music that contains anything but virtue?

(3) That other 23 hours is a very important time, because it can completely wash out what you are doing in the word.

(4) Your intake of the word can be overwhelmed by your intake of worldly culture, and our current American culture is overwhelmingly unvirtuous.

(5) God the Holy Spirit then must make do with about a 24 to 1 ratio of information, and that is the Custer battlefield of the soul.

(6) Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.

The day of judgement and the spoken word, v.36. "But I say to you that every useless word which men speak they will pay back concerning the word of it in the day of judgment;"

ARGOS is 'idle,' 'lazy,' 'unproductive,' or 'useless.' This adjective modifies RHEMA, the spoken word, or some issue which comes from the spoken word.

Listen again to the third commandment: "you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."

(1) It is quite apparent that Christ refers to this commandment when He makes this proclamation; but we must exercise care, because it seems as though there is an expansion of sorts on the prohibition.

(2) The commandment of Moses concentrates on the vain-spoken word to God; here Christ employs the adjective of universality, PAN. It shows an all-encompassing situation. It is 'every useless word.'

(3) This begins to sound very much like the Sermon on the Mount, where Christ set forth His establish code for His millennial rule.

(4) Generally speaking, Christ's establishment code was much stricter than that of Moses.

But wait a minute; the reference to the Day of Judgment undermines this interpretation.

(1) There is no eternal judgment related to the establishment code; the establishment code is for time only.

(2) Let's go back to our context for a moment. The very next verse, verse 37, relates this saying to salvation. It is indeed the last judgment.

(3) So at the last judgment we will be justified on the basis of our vain words.

(4) Now there is a connection between the third commandment and this saying of Christ.

(5) The third commandment is the relationship with God commandment; it says that when you use God's name, it is to be in the context of a relationship with Him.

(a) The very first time that you call upon God is when you respond to the gospel.

(b) He then responds by causing you to be saved.

(6) So at the Great White Throne, the last judgment in history, Christ judges the unbeliever on the basis of every vain word.

(a) This is an entirely just judgment, because anyone one of those words could have been admission of total depravity and an expression of reliance on His work.

(b) Go back to the second half of the commandment of Moses: "for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."

The explanation of the principle, v.37. "for from your words you will be justified, and from your words you will be condemned."

There are two verbs in this verse which describe the two fates at the final judgment:

(1) Justification - DIKAIOTHESE. This is the future passive indicative of DIKAIIOO.

(a) The future indicative portrays an action that is certain to happen. There is a prophetic inevitability about this word.

(b) The passive voice makes it clear that the subject is the recipient of the action, and he does not produce it on his own.

(c) Here that subject is multiple - it is every believer who will go before the Great White Throne of Jesus Christ and receive salvation judgment.

(d) By your words you will be justified; these words you speak to God... "I believe in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross."

(e) This brings about the veracity of God toward His word; at that very moment He imputes the

righteousness of His own Son to you, and on the basis of that righteousness you are declared justified to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

(2) Condemnation - KATADIKASTHESE. The future passive indicative of KATADIKAZO.

(a) Again the future indicative predicts with certainty and inevitability an event.

(b) And again the passive voice has God producing the action, and here the unbeliever receiving it.

(c) Every unbeliever in history will receive this judgment; every single one of his words will condemn him, because any one of them could have been an expression of belief in the Son.

(d) The stubborn unbelief of this class of human being makes every single one of their words in vain.

(e) Their words therefore come back to condemn them utterly; all of their words - every expression of thought will come back to haunt them before Jesus Christ at the final judgment.

(f) Every word will be considered vain and empty; every word useless because of the yawning gulf of eternity in the Lake of Fire.

(3) Romans 10:5-13 is a part of this: "(5) For Moses writes that the man who does the righteousness which is from the law will live by them. (6) But the righteousness from faith thus says, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (This works to bring Christ down); (7) Or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (This works to bring Christ up from the dead). (8) But what does it say? 'The word (RHEMA) is near you in your mouth and in your heart. This is the word (RHEMA) of faith which we preach. (9) That if you confess with your mouth 'Lord Jesus' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart he believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses unto salvation. (11) For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes upon Him will not be put to shame. (12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is over all, wealth unto all who call upon Him. (13) For everyone who will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

The Demand For a Sign Refused

Matthew 12:38-45.

Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.'

But after formulating an answer He said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation pursues a sign, and no sign will be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet.

For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here.

The Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because she came from the end of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold something greater than Solomon is here.

But whenever the unclean spirit comes out from the man, it goes through waterless places seeking rest and it does not find [it].

Then he says, 'I will return into my house from which I came; and when he comes he finds [it] unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

Then he goes and takes alongside with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and after entering they live there; and the last state of that man becomes worst than the first. Thus it will be also with this generation.'"

Outline.

The response of the Jewish rulers, v.38.

Christ's reply, vv.39-45.

The general principle, v.39a.

The application and exception, v.39b-40.

The testimony of the Ninevites at their resurrection, v.41.

The testimony of the Queen of the South at her resurrection, v.42.

The illustration of the unclean spirit, vv.43-45.

The plight of the exorcised spirit, v.43.

The usual idea of the exorcised spirit, and his usual success, v.44.

The foul party of the unclean spirits, v.45a.

The point of comparison with the present generation, v.45b.

Exposition.

Verse 38: "Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.'"

This passage is a continuation of the one we have just finished. It contains the response of the Pharisees to the gospel call and statement of impending judgment by Christ.

Christ says some harsh words toward the Pharisees and Scribes; not too harsh, but appropriately harsh and difficult to swallow.

But Christ's words also represent a dual purpose: to defend the validating ministry of the Holy Spirit, and to also leave His enemies with recourse to believe.

Although most immediate in the context is the statement of Matthew 12:36-37 concerning the vocalization of belief, the Pharisees seem to aim their remarks at Christ's discourse on the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit contained in vv.31-32.

Again the Pharisees employ the appellation 'Teacher,' which is DIDASKALE in the Greek.

You can see that these may well be some of the same Pharisees who were at Simon's house when the formerly sinful woman washed Christ's feet with her tears.

Remember, the Pharisees no longer regard Christ as the Messiah, nor do they even regard Him as a prophet.

As a simple teacher of truth, Jesus would even be below them in their hierarchy of authority and power. To them, Christ may be a teacher, but He is

less than a Pharisee or Scribe. The difference would be the same as it is in our culture when we define the difference between a teacher and a scholar.

Therefore DIDASKALE may be a term of respect under normal conditions, but here it becomes demeaning.

With simple language some of the Pharisees and Scribes ask for a sign.

The present active indicative verb THELOMEN portrays a simple desire.

The complementary infinitive IDEIN tells us that they desired something that they could see with their own eyes.

APO plus the genitive of source of the personal pronoun SOU makes it clear that Christ must produce this sign from Himself.

SEMEION is the sign. Some sort of supernatural act, a miracle or healing is in view.

These men cannot take Christ's word for it; neither do they accept what they have likely just witnessed - the exorcism of a demon. They have discredited that very thing, so that Christ must now jump through another hoop of theirs.

Verses Thirty Nine through Forty One: "(39) But after formulating an answer He said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation pursues a sign, and no sign will be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. (40) For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. (41) Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here.'"

The aorist participle APOKRITHEIS depicts Christ thinking about what to say. This never really portrays how long Christ thinks, only that He does. Considering Christ's great genius in the spiritual realm, it is probably not too long at all.

Christ makes grave judgment against this generation of Jews.

They are evil, PONERA. The Greek word has pretty much all of the connotation that ours does.

They are adulterous, MOIKALIS. This was a favorite description of Hosea the prophet.

Hosea 3:1, "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.'"

The children of the Northern kingdom had turned from Yahweh to worship every kind of foreign god.

They had turned to other gods like an adulterous woman turns to men apart from her husband.

So evil might characterize the legalism of the Pharisees, while adultery the idolatry of the lascivious types; neither were right.

PONERA and MOIKALIS represent two grave errors regarding spiritual life. Both result in failure and harsh judgment for the Christian.

The verb EPIZETEO describes the action of the evil and adulterous generation: it paints a picture of zealous and inordinate pursuit of something illicit.

There are good things to seek in the spiritual life. To pursue the word with zeal is considered a wonderful thing.

Psalms 119:10, "With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments."

The evil and adulterous generation inordinately seeks a sign. Well this group of Pharisees wanted Christ to do a sign right there before them, even though just a little while before on that very same day he had performed the sign of David, the exorcism of a demon.

And here is something that is no secret at all; someone who is honest with his or her spiritual needs has no need of a sign at all.

(1) We have been living in the age of the invisible God for nearly two thousand years now.

(2) Although there are many wonderful ways to come to an awareness of God, and to see His wonderful works in our lives, there is no visible God or visible supernatural act to cling to.

(3) Christ is offering the truth here, and an excellent way to recover from sinful depravity and human misery.

(4) Basic honesty about your spiritual needs means:

(a) If you have never met God before, it means admitting your sinful separation from God, and your helplessness to remedy that state. From that point being honest means seeing Jesus Christ as the divine solution to the problem of sin.

(b) If you are a Christian in a state of sin, it means removing yourself from that state through repentance and confession.

(c) If you are a Christian struggling with the issues of life in the devil's world, or just wanting to identify your destiny, then it means getting under the authority of a good pastor who can teach you about those important things.

(5) In other words, you need Jesus Christ, you need a solution to post-salvation sin, and you need the word of truth in your life.

The only sign given to the incarnation generation will be the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Jonah was a prophet of eighth century Israel. Apart from his own book of prophecy, he is mentioned only in 2 Kings 14:25: "He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke through his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher."

(1) Since the minor prophet Jonah has the same father's name as the one mentioned in Kings, they are very likely the same man.

(2) Jeroboam II ruled the Northern kingdom Israel from about 793-753 BC. His reign was an Indian summer, where Israel briefly ascended in power and prosperity before their destruction in 722 BC

(3) Jonah's only claim to fame aside from his evangelization of the Assyrians was his prediction of the success of Jeroboam II in his military campaign.

(4) Jonah had great difficulty in obeying the command of Yahweh; it is not mentioned why he fled to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3), but from his response

at the end of his book, it is clear that he disdained the people of Nineveh.

(5) Assyria was a second-rate world power at the time that Jonah went to them and gave them the gospel in the middle of the 8th century, BC Their glorious days under Tiglath-Pileser I and Shalmaneser I were gone. For fifty or a hundred years, their empire had been experiencing military defeat and domestic trouble.

(6) There had been limited contact between Israel and Assyria before this time, but Assyria was a Gentile nation and certainly a military threat.

(7) The Pharisees and Scribes of Christ's time were throwbacks to Jonah.

(a) Jonah did not want to witness to the Assyrians because they were Gentiles.

(b) Since the Jews were God's chosen people, what would be the purpose of bringing God's good news to someone else?

Jonah is an intriguing choice of comparison by Christ, because he is an appropriate illustration of the Pharisees, and he is a type of Christ in the grave.

(1) Jonah's reluctance to go to Nineveh is racial; he couldn't be more like the Jews of Christ's day in that respect.

(2) Jonah's brief tenure in the belly of the fish is a type or foreshadow of Christ's time in the grave.

(a) Again verse forty reads, "For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."

· So Jonah was in the belly of the KETOS, sea-monster for three days.

· And Christ would be in the heart of the earth for three days.

(b) Listen to Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish (2:2-9), "(2) I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. I cried for help from the belly of Sheol; You heard my voice. (3) For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me. (4) So I said, 'I have been expelled from your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy

temple.' (5) The waters closed over my life. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. (6) I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. (7) While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into Your holy temple. (8) Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, (9) but I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord."

· Jonah uses the language of death. When he went into the water, he was cast into the abyss, the TEHOM or great deep of the sea.

· The doors of the sea close over him, and Jonah is lost for dead - he has descended to the very roots of the mountains, in the pit.

· His cry from the deep was a cry from Sheol itself, so deep was he in the ocean.

· Now Christ would actually die and go to Sheol while his body was in the grave. There, He would preach to fallen angels about His victory on planet earth, 1 Peter 3:19.

(3) On the basis of this great Psalm of Jonah, the fish vomits his body up onto dry land, and he fulfills his mission as a prophet to Assyria.

(a) Assyria would then grow great under Tiglath-Pileser III, and come down and conquer the Northern Kingdom.

(b) The ascension of Assyria is a spiritual ascension that result in prosperity. They are employed by God as the fist of discipline on Israel.

(c) The precarious position of the Northern Kingdom during Jonah's time was a parallel to the precariousness of Israel during Christ's day.

(d) Because of Israel's racist and arrogant attitude toward the Gentiles, and because of their participation in idolatry, they had to be destroyed. They were not only poor witnesses before God, but dangerous to themselves and nations around them. God's justice had to act.

(4) So as Christ says these words about a sign to Israel being the sign of Jonah, they would understand it as a warning.

(a) But listen: one nation at least did repent during Jonah's time - the nation of Assyria.

(b) And it is the hope of Christ that the sign of Jonah will cause a revival.

(c) Fascinating: that Christ is already identifying that it is going to take a lot more than miracles and healings and exorcisms to bring Israel to repentance.

(d) It will take the sign of Jonah, the greatest sign of all. Romans 1:4, "...(Jesus), who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

(e) And even the sign of Jonah will not bring about the intended result, due to the stubborn nature of the Jews of Christ's generation.

Verse Forty One: "Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here."

Jonah was a reluctant prophet; this much is exceedingly obvious. Even on his most successful day, he hates the repentance of the Gentile Ninevites.

Jonah 4:1-4, "(1) But it (their repentance) greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. (2) He prayed to the Lord and said, 'Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. (3) Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.' (4) The Lord said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry?'"

(1) Jonah actually preferred to die because he had converted Gentiles to the plan of God.

(2) This really angered Jonah because since he was an eighth century prophet to Israel, he had no converts there.

(3) With this attitude, the human side of Jonah's efforts in Nineveh must have been paltry at best. And yet it was its best work as measured by response.

(4) But the Ninevite men will stand again in judgment against the incarnation generation, because even as Gentiles they understood God's plan and repented.

(a) And for a hundred years' time these Ninevite men supplanted Israel as a client nation unto God.

(b) They would become proud and suffer the fifth cycle of discipline, as predicted by the prophet Nahum.

(c) They will stand again: ANASTESONTAI. This is the resurrection verb in the future indicative.

(d) At some future time the men of Nineveh will rise again in judgment against the incarnation generation.

(e) The resurrection of Israel occurs at the end of the millennium, when all Jewish believers are resurrected unto judgment, along with many others.

(f) There before the Great White Throne will be arrayed all the people of the world.

- Old Testament Gentile believers will be there.

- Unbelievers from the incarnation generation will be there.

- And the Assyrian believers of Jonah's time will stand again, looking proudly toward their savior Jesus Christ.

(5) And think about what Jesus Christ gave them.

(a) He gave them his entire self, trying every day to initiate their salvation.

(b) He had the filling of the Holy Spirit, by which He performed miracles and healings and exorcisms.

(c) He had an incredible amount of doctrine and wisdom in His soul, so that He was fully prepared for every legitimate question and even illegitimate attacks.

(d) And He would die and stay in the belly of the earth for three days - but after three days He would rise again in complete victory over death.

(e) These all were so compelling.

Now we are analogous to the Ninevites; we have hardly anything at all to go on in the way of miracles.

(1) Christ is not present before us.

(2) The temporary spiritual gifts have passed away, leaving only the charlatans and their deceived ones. No one has the power to perform miracles or healings or exorcisms during this period of the church age.

(3) According to the true doctrine of the imminence of the rapture there is no prophecy fulfilled in the church age. Furthermore, any tribulational prophecy must be able to be fulfilled at any time, so that none of it can be linked to technology. It is no more valid to link information from Revelation to our time than to the Middle Ages.

(4) So during this dispensation of the invisible God, it is more difficult to settle on the one true God.

(5) The great way to see the supernatural power of God is by changing your life, truly changing your life by the intake and application of Bible Truth.

(6) So if we repent it is a powerful argument for the greatness of God, because we are like the Ninevites, living in a very degenerate society, and yet seeing an honest need for a relationship with God.

(7) What a powerful witness our repentance then becomes! Without miracles, without much evidence of the supernatural, only on the merit of the truth of God do we repent. How great the glory to God.

The Witness of the Queen of the South on Judgment Day, v.42: "The Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because she came from the end of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold something greater than Solomon is here."

1 Kings 10:1-10, "(1) Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with difficult questions. (2) So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. (3) Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her. (4) When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,

(5) the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. (6) Then she said to the king, 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. (7)

Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. (8) How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. (9) Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.' (10) She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great amount of spices and precious stones. Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon."

2 Chronicles 9:12, "King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she requested besides a return for what she had brought to the king. Then she turned and went to her own land with her servants."

The queen of Sheba was from a Gentile nation; she was indeed a Gentile, and this is important in understanding Christ's reference.

Whereas Jonah is a good example of a very weak witness, as you can see, Solomon is an ideal example of a very strong witness. Listen again to verses 3-5, "(3) Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her. (4) When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, (5) the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her."

Solomon answered all of her questions, which are described as difficult.

Furthermore, she got to see his house, and the conduct of his household servants, and even the way that he treated them.

There were no flaws whatsoever in the witness of Solomon. He has Israel functioning as intended by God - they are truly a light unto all the nations of the world.

And going to the strong witness, even the strongest witness in the history of Israel, Christ is considered even stronger.

Verses Forty-Three to Forty-Five: "(43) But whenever the unclean spirit comes out from the man, it goes through waterless places seeking rest and it does not find [it]. (44) Then he says, 'I will return into my house from which I came; and when he comes he finds [it] unoccupied, swept, and put in order. (45) Then he goes and takes alongside with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and after entering they live there; and the last state of that man becomes worst than the first. Thus it will be also with this generation.'" "

Now this is intended as an illustration. These are general truths about the actions and attitudes of demons.

Christ is the greatest expert on demonology ever, combining Old Testament doctrine and personal experience.

But this is an illustration that describes the mental attitude of the incarnation generation. They are quite negative to the teaching of Jesus Christ, and exceedingly dishonest about their spiritual needs.

Observe that the parallel is between the unclean spirit and the person of Christ's generation. They are considered the same according to a certain mode of behavior.

Verse 43 begins with the word HOTAN, which is translated 'whenever.' The 'ever' part of it makes it an open case. It is something that is always true as long as the conditions are met.

The aorist subjunctive verb EXELTHE is a gnomic aorist, that states a general truth or axiom. It is what is always true. It means to 'exit,' or 'go out.' This is most likely after the demon has been cast out.

Considering the context has to do with exorcism this is especially likely.

So the demon goes out from the man.

AKATHARTON PNEUMA is unclean spirit. This has a kind of interesting Jewish twist on the old fallen angel idea.

Any person that touched a carcass was considered unclean, and apart from the fellowship of Israel under certain purification rituals were undertaken. See Leviticus chapters 11, 15, 22.

Nor could a Jew come into physical contact with a leper and remain clean.

There are various other regulations concerning unclean things and people. Most of the time uncleanness has to do with physical death. Perhaps the best definition of an unclean animal is that it is a scavenger or comes into contact with carcasses.

The important point is that uncleanness had to do with fellowship. It represents temporary spiritual death, and therefore cannot be tolerated.

Therefore, the unclean spirit is the angelic being who is apart from fellowship with God, and is in a state of spiritual death.

Uncleanness is also associated with idols and demon worship in Zechariah 13:2, "And on that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit."

The way that Christ says this makes a connection with His Jewish readers. And He interprets the doctrine of uncleanness in just the right way, something that His opponents seldom if ever did.

Although the Scribes and Pharisees understood the legalistic function of the purifications, they had little if any clue to the spiritual significance.

So now the fallen angel - unclean spirit goes out from the man. And whenever it does it experiences the same experience.

It goes through waterless places.

(1) DIERCHETAI means to pass through. This is the present of general truth portraying what always happens when a demon is cast out from a man.

(2) ANUDRON TOPON - waterless places. Now this becomes an interesting description indeed. This is more of a general description of the passage of the unclean spirit through places where there is no satisfaction. It portrays the experience

of crossing a desert and being thirsty and having no water at all.

Seeking rest and does not find it.

(1) The present active participle ZETOUN is contemporaneous with the main verb. So while passing through waterless places, the unclean spirit is seeking something.

(2) The object of the participle is ANAPAUSIN. This means to rest or stop with a special iterative sense of 'again.' So it is looking for a rest stop similar to the one it has just had.

(3) Make no mistake; this unclean spirit is desperately seeking another body to inhabit.

(4) The unclean spirit is after all a spirit, and therefore it no longer has its angelic body. It has long ago 'died' in the angelic sense of having body and soul separated.

(5) For that reason, it is completely deprived of sensory perception, and it lusts for that very thing.

(6) It really is kind of a creepy portrayal; the spirit looking and lusting for the sensual experience of inhabiting a human body.

(7) But this particular unclean spirit does not find another body to inhabit, so it must return to the place from whence it came.

Verse 44 contains the soliloquy of the demon:

At the point where the unclean spirit can find no other home for himself, he says to himself... TOTE LEGEI.

The verb EPISTREPHO portrays a return to a place that has previously been visited.

He decides to return to the house from where he came out [EIS TON OIKON MOU HOTHEN EXELTHON]

(1) He calls it 'my house', which is the noun OIKON plus the personal pronoun in the possessive genitive, 'my.'

(2) Of course it isn't his house in the true sense, but it was given to him. That is the nature of demon possession. The demon possesses the house of the human body because he is willingly given control of it by someone.

(3) See the doctrine of demon possession.

(4) So he returns to his house from whence he came out.

The aorist active participle ELTHON portrays an action that occurs before the main verb. So first he comes, and then he finds.

The present active indicative of HEURISKEI denotes a simple act of finding - it concentrates on the very moment that the demon re-enters the house of someone's body. Of course this unbeliever human being must have re-invited that demon in order for him to receive permission to do so.

(1) Well the demon finds the house in perfect order - it is clean and swept and organized.

(2) The body has recovered from his last ravages and his last party. Perhaps the person has recovered from the chemical addiction; perhaps he has ceased the sexual addiction that includes abuse. Perhaps he has gone on a diet from the gluttony.

(3) But regardless the body is in good shape once again, and therefore very well set-up for another round of desperate sensuality.

10. The forty fifth verse concentrates on the degeneration of the situation.

Before entering the old house again, the unclean spirit goes to wherever the other disembodied spirits hang out. Most likely in Sheol, at Torments.

(1) This is the compartment under the abyss that contains the souls of unbelievers from all of human history. Job 26:5 "The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants."

(a) The waters here refers to the surface ocean. Their inhabitants are the sea creatures.

(b) The departed spirits tremble under here.

(2) This place is mentioned in Isaiah 50:11 - 'You will lie down in torment.'

(3) Luke 16 contains a true story about a man who lived there.

(4) Some the rebels of Korah were swallowed up alive by the earth, and were the only ones ever to arrive alive at this place, Num 16:30ff.

(5) David was confident that he would not live in torments after his death, Psalm 16:10.

(6) The resurrection removes the power of Sheol, or physical death, Hosea 13:14.

(7) These unbelievers await the final judgement of the great white throne. They are those who reside in 'Hades' per Rev 20:13. Death is a reference to the living who reside on planet earth.

But nevertheless the unclean spirit goes and takes alongside himself seven other evil spirits.

(1) The verb PARALAMBANEI portrays the taking alongside. It is a kind of chummy verb, where there is companionship. The pronoun HEAUTOU 'himself' emphasizes that very thing again.

(2) The idea is a kind of thing where the one unclean spirit says to others 'Hey guys I found a fantastic body, come on along with me, and we'll have a blast.'

(3) But of course they do not have the man's best interests at heart.

And so after entering they all eight reside there. And the last state of the man becomes worse than the first.

(1) Well this should be obvious; whereas before there was only one, now there are eight.

(2) And eight having a riot in one man's body is a great riot indeed. Eight desperate angelic souls seeking to have sensual experiences of various kinds - eating, sex, art, drama, exercise, sunning, music, and much more, I am sure.

(3) Do the demons decide by democracy what they will do next? Of course not. Do they obey one master? No. They all try to do it at once, so that the poor fool who has let them in is now considered quite insane.

11. "So also will it be with this evil generation."

The comparative adverb HOUTOS draws a line of comparison between the twice-possessed man and the current generation in Israel.

The future indicative of the verb EIMI points to a certain future reality for the evil generation.

So they are like a man who is demon possessed, and then relieved of his burden because the demon is cast out.

During the time between possessions, the man has an opportunity to stay demon-free forever through accepting Christ as his savior.

But instead of that, he decides to get into shape, and to undergo some kind of regimen of self-improvement, all of which is complete folly.

Self-improvement within the confines of the cosmic system does not improve anything, and in the end you are worse off than when you started.

If ever there was a perfect example of this it would be psychotherapy. There is nothing wrong with the renovation of the soul under the principle of divine grace. There is everything wrong with it under human power and philosophy.

But there are many other things that fall under this umbrella as well. Exercise and diet are cosmic forms of self-improvement when devoid of proper motivation. The apostle Paul was an advocate of exercise, but not for some foul reason of self-improvement. He just wanted to be in good shape so that he could study more.

Makeovers motivated by vanity or adultery are an evil form of self-improvement.

But all of these forms of so-called self-improvement lead to greater degeneracy. And even if it is not within the realm of demon-possession, it is another cycle downward into the cosmic cesspool.

Even as a Christian you may make decisions from a position of weakness and unhappiness; these kinds of decisions always result in greater degeneracy and weakness.

If you make a decision that undermines your priorities, then it is going to result in greater weakness; weakness always breeds weakness.

Col. Thieme has often said, the more you surrender to fear, the more fear will have power over your life.

Well, let's expand that; the more you surrender to unhappiness, the more power unhappiness will have over your life.

The more you surrender to anger, the more power anger will have over your life.

The more you surrender to lust, the more power lust will have over your life.

And when each element of the cosmic lie gains power over your life, you lose willpower, you lose happiness and you lose the greatest thing of all: self-control through the operation of the power of God in your life.

That self-control is fine evidence of the operating power of God.

So the generation that lived at the time of Christ is always looking for happiness, and foolish enough to let the demons back in.
