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The Parables of Jesus Christ: Seven Spirits and a Swept House

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

PARABLE ELEVEN: Seven Spirits and a Swept House (Mt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26)

SURVEY

A demon left the person it was possessing and eventually returned, finding that person "empty, swept, and clean." The demon then brought seven other demons, each more wicked than it was, all of whom now occupied that person, making his present condition far worse than before.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is the only parable dealing with the frightful subject of demon possession.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Here is a case of reformation without regeneration. The man in the parable turned over a new leaf, but not a new life. This can prove to be a very dangerous situation. To illustrate:
 1. An unbelieving drunk through sheer human willpower is able to dry out and become a respectable member of society.
 2. He then is filled with pride and ridicules the saving grace of God, boasting that human determination is sufficient for all things.
 3. In this state he becomes far more valuable to Satan than when he was a poor derelict.
- In this parable Jesus strongly suggests that there are degrees of evil in the hierarchy of the demonic world. Various Scripture verses seem to support this. Note the diverse actions caused by various demons.
 1. Seducing and false spirits—They are associated with false doctrine (2 Cor. 11:4; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1-6).
 2. Unclean and evil spirits—They seem to cause physical suffering (Mt. 10:1; Lk. 7:21; Acts 5:16; 8:7).
 3. Miracle-working spirits—These may attempt to imitate the work of God (Rev. 16:13-14).
 4. Foul spirits—These are linked to sexual immorality (Rev. 18:2-3).
 5. Violent spirits (Acts 19:12-16; 1 Sam. 18:10-11)
 6. Lying spirits (1 Kings 22:22-23)

- Jesus may well have had the nation Israel in mind as He related this parable. Plagued with the demon of unbelief since Kadesh-barnea (Num. 13-14; Psa. 78, 106) the nation had, initially at least, favorably responded to the messages of both John the Baptist (Mt. 3:5-6), and Jesus Himself (Jn. 6:14-15). But all too soon the Jewish leaders would officially reject Him (Mt. 27:15-26), thus making "*the last state ... worse than the first*" (Lk. 11:26).