

23 *“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. 24 “When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ 25 “And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 “Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”*

27 And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.” 28 But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.”

29 And as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah. 30 “For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 “The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 32 “The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

I've incorporated the final verse from last week as a bridge into our verses that we will study together this morning.

Jesus is in the final months or perhaps even month of His earthly ministry, and in these passages He begins to say some final things. The words are weightier, if that's possible than previously.

What do you say to a people who are rejecting you when the time allotted to them is coming to a close? Well, we'll begin by looking again at vs. 23, because in that single statement, for all time, Jesus divides all of humanity past present and future into just 2 groups. With Him. Against Him.

With Him in His kingdom, His authority to reign, both now and forever. And against Him, those who do not flee the coming judgement of this condemned world, the kingdom of Satan.

The default is the latter. Every person since the fall is born in sin. Born into a rebellion against God. Born into a perishing world that will be judged condemned by God and destroyed with all evil. That's the default.

That sort of gives new meaning to the word gospel. Good news. The good news is, you can flee the coming judgement. You can repent of this perishing world and all of its sinful systems and you can appeal to God's grace for forgiveness of all of your sin.

Salvation is coming out of this condemned world and belonging to Jesus. We are given eternal life. We are quickened from the spiritual death that sin caused and given life, with Christ, and we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus boiled all of that down to just a few incredibly simple words.

23 "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.

The context of those words is what we looked at in some depth last week. Jesus cast a demon out of a man, it was a deaf and dumb demon, and the moment it left the man he could speak, and if deafness was also part of it, he could hear as well. Instantly. No recovery sessions, no language lessons, nothing. The demon went out of the man and he spoke.

And the crowds were amazed. Amazement at such an astonishing miracle had gripped them. As it should. But then the rulers of Israel, the pharisees and the chief priests and the scribes come along to dispel the natural astonishment by telling the people, He does it by Beelzebul. A name for Satan.

Beelzebul was the fly god. The dung god. The magot god. It was not only the most blasphemous thing they could possibly think of to say, they choose

the dung god version for their particular blasphemy. They add derision to their blasphemy.

Jesus does the miracles. That is undeniable. Nobody denies the miracles. But He is able to do them because He's indwelt by Satan. Jesus is the devil. That's how He does the miracles.

And Jesus says there are only two groups of people in all the world for all time. Those who are with me, and those who are against me. Those who are gathering with me, and those who are scattering. Those who belong to me and are in my kingdom, and those who remain in Satan's kingdom.

And then He talks about the miracle itself. A demon had taken flight. A man possessed and tormented was set free of the tormentor. No one denies that, not even the pharisee's who are deranged with hatred of Jesus.

24 "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 "Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

There are 3 ways to consider what Jesus words mean. I think all 3 of the possible ways to interpret His words are valid, so we will quickly look at all 3.

The first possibility is the normal one for us. The literal meaning of the words. Literally, and all 3 of the possible scanarios have this in common, literally, a demon was removed. The house is clean. But what does that man do with Jesus? It goes back to the for me or against me statement.

Jesus happens upon a man with a demon, orders the demon out, what replaces the demon? If the fellow lands short of being with Jesus, that house remains empty and 8 demons move back in, and he's worse off than he started.

That's the literal meaning alone. But consider all that Jesus is saying in these final words to Israel. In 2005 a "study" of American youth that have some claim to evangelicalism in America came up with some discouraging conclusions. And there is a direct parallel to Israel.

The study concluded that most so-called christian or evangelical young people had landed short of historic christianity. The authors of the resulting book came up with a name for what this new phenomenon is. They called it Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

These young people have these things in common. They believe in some sort of a higher power, but that higher power stays mostly out of their lives. He makes no particular demands. He (or I suppose she, we really don't know) is undefined. It's not the clearly defined God of the Bible. But it's a nice God and when you're in a jam, he'll come and help. Sort of an as needed basis.

They are moral. They live by a vague morality. Mostly it's not cool to lie or steal or kill. But sexual morality is nothing like the one defined in the Bible. But still, there is a morality of goodness.

And finally, their religion is a self help system that makes them feel good about themselves. Their god is a therapeutic god. He wants you to feel good. There is wellness involved. That's on the palate of things they want. But ignorance of historic christianity and of this book is universal.

Where did such a religion come from? Their parents. The youth are just a mirror image of their parents evangelicalism. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

What does that have to do with what Jesus is talking about in this passage. Just this; a cleaned up house that is devoid of Jesus, devoid of His Spirit, is 8 times more wicked than a violent wicked one that understands it's violent and wicked.

When Jesus called Matthew Levi to come out of his tax booth and follow Him, Matthew threw a big banquet, and being a tax collector, the only friends

Matthew Levi had to invite were the other riff raff. The religious outcasts. The sinners. The prostitutes.

Notice something. Jesus doesn't have any problem with all those folks. It's the righteous people in Jerusalem that are plotting His murder, not the sinners and prostitutes.

The righteous folk, who have cleaned up the exterior of the house are the ones who are 8 times more wicked than the sinners. The religious folk. The moralists who devoutly count out their peas so that God get's his tenth. Those are the ones plotting Jesus death.

Why? They can't repent. What would they repent of??? They don't need Jesus. They're already righteous. Moralistic people who are not with Jesus, are against Jesus. And they're 8 times more dangerous than ordinary liars and thief's.

That's who Jesus is speaking to at this time when those moral, righteous folk have explained that Jesus sent the demon to flight because He's obviously the devil. That expands this passage to a greater depth of meaning than just the literal one. 1 demon gone. The house swept and in order. Jesus doesn't move into that house. 7 more demons join the one who was ordered out.

There is a third possibility, and I think all of them are totally valid. Jesus is God. It's not unusual for His sayings to have layers and layers of truth depths.

I think the picture of the demon taking flight and the house being cleansed and swept and put in order, but remaining empty is a picture that encompasses national Israel. The whole nation benefited from Jesus. Their Messiah had come. The house is swept and put in order. But they have rejected their Messiah. They will eliminate their Messiah.

Let me read you some haunting words as you think about what Jesus said about one demon leaving, the house swept but vacant, and then 7 more that are more wicked than the beginning state come. From Matthew 23, after the last

supper as they move towards the garden where Jesus will be arrested, this is what He says;

37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 “Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 “For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

Listen again to our verses. And as you listen, think about the literal danger, the moral danger, and the national danger that the words picture.

24 “When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ 25 “And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 “Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

Morality that is devoid of Jesus, that falls short of Jesus coming in and dwelling in that house, is 8 times more dangerous than just being an ordinary sinner who knows they deserve hell. Morality that is devoid of Jesus, that falls short of Jesus coming in and dwelling in that house, is 8 times more dangerous than just being an ordinary sinner who knows they deserve hell.

The riff raff of israel never accused jesus of being the devil, the most ardently religious people are the ones who do that.

Peter comments on this idea of moralism devoid of Jesus. Of people who claim some connection to christianity but it's not real. They aren't with the Saviour. They don't have Jesus.

2Pet. 2:20 If indeed they have escaped the corruption of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, only to be entangled and

overcome by it again, their final condition is worse than it was at first. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn away from the holy commandment passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Moralism devoid of Jesus. 8 times more deadly.

Next, Luke includes yet another pitfall I believe. And it's similar, and we see this all the time. This is very common in our times.

27 And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." 28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."

This works the same way as the first one. Morality but no Jesus. This is sentimentality about Jesus, but no Jesus.

Sentimentality about Jesus is the big T in the therapeutic part of moralistic therapeutic deism. There are a thousand different Jesus's that people get all weepy and sentimental about. False sentimentality can be very soothing and therapeutic.

I think one of the most interesting versions of what I'm going to try to describe is perhaps the Mormon Jesus. The mormons are very sentimental and emotional about someone named Jesus. They have pictures on the wall and they get all weepy about this person Jesus.

But the Jesus of mormonism doesn't forgive sins. They get all worked up about their Jesus, but he isn't the Jesus who died on a cross as a substitute for their sins, and he didn't rise from the dead.

This particular Jesus that this lady in the Luke passage shouts out about is more of a catholic Jesus than a Mormon Jesus; *"Blessed is the womb that*

bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.”

This is a danger equivalent to moralism without Jesus. It works the other way. You get all worked up emotionally and sentimentally about Jesus and you feel very religious, you have a burning in your chest for some invention of Jesus, whichever one it is, makes no difference to Satan.

It's totally possible to be all emotional about Jesus and not have Him. This is the base line of lots of false religion. All weepy and emotional about Jesus but as empty as the house that the demon went out of. Very therapeutic. You feel so warm and fuzzy about your idea of Jesus, but if it isn't the Jesus of this book, and if Jesus doesn't actually dwell in you, Christ in you, the hope of glory, it's a real danger.

27And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.” 28But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.”

Jesus didn't let this woman go away with all of her warm fuzziness, did He. Sentimentality is nothing but a dangerous dead end. She said beautiful things. There is great beauty in her statement. It all sounds like a Michaelangelo painting. Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.

In Israel, this was every woman's deepest wish. Someone has to be the mother of the Messiah. There is truth to what she voiced. It was the most blessed hope of the women of Israel. To be used of God to bring in the blessing.

But Jesus doesn't allow for empty sentimentalism does He. Sentiment is OK. We long for the rushing wind of the Holy Spirit in this place. We want so much for all of this to be real. We want to worship with our minds and our emotions.

But to have the emotional element devoid of the reality is dangerous. It's

fabulous to have an emotional love for Jesus. But it is also a danger. If it is short of the truths of this book, if the emotionalism doesn't come from a hunger for and an obedience to the words of this book, if it's disconnected from truth, it can be a dangerous trap.

*27 And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." 28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and **DO** it."*

Beautiful words about Jesus won't get you to heaven. Jesus gets you to heaven.

Finally, a third pitfall that leaves people outside the kingdom of God, leaves people short of having Jesus and Jesus having them. These pharisees and scribes and rulers of Israel failed to understand how important Jesus is.

They have come up with a conclusion about how the miracles are happening. He's the devil.

Jesus loves to make these guys mad. He taunts them a bit himself. And He always uses the same formula. It makes them deranged with rage. He tells them, you don't believe, no problem, God will take the blessings to the gentiles.

That was what he said at the beginning, at Nazareth, the first time they tried to murder him. Remember in chapter 4:

24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. 25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; 29 and they rose

up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

Don't believe? No problem, God will bless the gentiles if you refuse it. Rage.

That's what He does here, with a twist. The gentiles that God blessed in the past when you were stiff necked and unbelieving, those folks will judge YOU at the judgement day. Gentiles will judge you righteous Pharisees and chief priests.

They would have killed Him that day if they could have gotten away with it. They had to wait for God's timing. Then they would murder Him.

29 And as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

They are wicked because God had poured out a cornucopia of signs and they, like the wicked described in Romans 1 are working hard to dis-believe. It's hard work, great effort to remain stiff necked in your wickedness given the amount of evidence God has shown them in all of the miracles.

Asking for further signs is rebellious and wicked. The only sign they'll get is the sign of Jonah. What's that? Just as Jonah was 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish, so the Son of man will be 3 days in the belly of the earth and then rise from the dead.

30 "For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.

Jonah survived and finally obedient, he preached to the Ninevites and they repented and God spared them for 4 more generations! Jesus with far more miracles preaches to Israel and they want Him dead. Who will judge who on the judgement day.

31 “The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

The Queen of Sheba, a gentile, and a woman will rise up and judge these wicked jews on the judgement day because she worked hard to discover the truth about the one true God. She traveled a great distance to find out with far less evidence than these jews have received.

All she got for all her effort was Solomon. These jews have the Son of God in their presence, with manifest miraculous evidence, far greater than Solomon and right in their face. She received God's truth, a woman and a gentile.

Something far more important than Solomon is here, and these men are rejecting at great effort. At the judgement a gentile and a woman will rise up and judge these all important religious rulers of Israel.

32 “The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

The Ninevites, non chosen, gentiles outside of the economy and revelation of God to his people the Jews will rise up and judge these men who have received volumes of evidence and are deranged with rage over God's gracious messenger, His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Just as the demon departed from the man, temporarily while his house was swept and put in order, and then returned with 7 additional demons more wicked than the first, so is the picture of Israel.

In some sense, swept and put in order by John, the fore runner of Jesus, but they don't want Jesus to dwell in their house, and when He is removed, their nation will be 8 times more wicked and 8 times more lost than before Him.

If you're in the mood to be depressed, read the histories of the Jews after the crucified their Messiah. Truly Jesus prophetic words are haunting them to this very day.

37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 “Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 “For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

God isn't finished with Israel yet. A day is coming, after they have endured a time of great tribulation when they will look upon their pierced Messiah, coming in the sky, and rejoice with mourning at their previous wickedness.

A day is coming when every surviving Jew will recognize the Messiah and believe.