

Article of the Month  
September, 2022

***Matthew 12:43-45***  
***What Does It Mean?***

This group of verses poses a number of questions in our minds. Primary among these questions is, “Why do these verses suddenly appear — seemingly as a subject dropped out of the air with no logical connection to what came before?” Here are the verses from the NAS translation:

Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, "I will return to my house from which I came;" and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will be with this evil generation.

As has often been stressed: CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT! But, unless we look very carefully, it is difficult to make a connection here with the context. Nevertheless, that connection IS present and is quite meaningful.

*THE KEY VERSE*

If we begin with verse 45, we have a point for stability in our understanding. In verse 45, Jesus tells us the secret of his words. He says, “Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation.”

Even before we look further, we can glean from these words several important points:

- (1) The whole demon-possession incident (verse 22) is about Israel at the first advent — “this...generation.”
- (2) The generation under consideration is “evil.” Therefore, as we consider the demon-possession story, it will help to explain Israel’s evil character during Jesus’ ministry.
- (3) When Jesus says, “Even so shall it be also...,” he is giving us very explicitly the “tie-in” we need to understand the demon-possession incident. He is saying that as it was with this man (the man he healed in 12:22), **SO ALSO** shall it be with Israel around him. THAT is the lesson of the incident. The entire incident is a teaching incident — a judgment witness or explanation to the Jews as to WHY most of them were not to be successful as the High Calling of Christianity opened.

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### *THE CONTEXT*

If we look back to verse 22, we have the actual incident of casting a demon out of a man. There are MANY VERSES before Jesus actually refers back to this. But we should note that in verse 43, Jesus' words begin with "But THE unclean spirit..." (RVIC). Different translations have varying wordings here. But they are nearly all pretty clearly worded as if they are referring to something we should already know about. It is NOT, "If AN unclean spirit..." It IS "THE unclean spirit..." Jesus is referring to something he hopes we haven't forgotten! And that "something" is verse 22. We have here an unmistakable reference to the miracle of verse 22. And this means we need to give verse 22 more weight in our consideration than we might have done.

### *THE GREATER MEANING OF THE MIRACLE*

It is BECAUSE Jesus refers back to this one-verse miracle of verse 22, and makes an enormous lesson out of it, that we should too! REMEMBER that, in verse 45, Jesus explicitly says this miracle is about "this generation" — that "it shall be ALSO so unto this evil generation." Jesus has TOLD US in no uncertain terms that the miracle of verse 22 is actually ABOUT the first-advent Jews! Knowing this, we can extrapolate the following conclusions:

- (1) At Jesus' first advent, it is Israel that was "brought to him." (Verse 22)
- (2) Israel was "demon possessed." What a concept! But it should not be too difficult for us to accept this claim. "Blindness" (verse 22) in part (according to Paul) had happened unto Israel until the full number of Gentiles would fill the body of Christ. (Romans 11:25, KJV) God did not cause their blindness — even though He both foresaw it and permitted it. Indeed, He knew He could USE it. But their blindness was induced by the great blinder, Satan, and his spirit supporters. (II Corinthians 4:4)

We recall that King Saul (who was a type of Israel and of the Jewish Age) was possessed of an evil spirit. That "evil spirit" may have been, in part, just a bad attitude on his part; but it was, no doubt, aided and abetted by the adversary.

- (3) The verse (22) tells us that this man was "blind" — he could not "see" (understand). He was also "dumb." Israel could not speak. The Pharisees and others were always ultimately "speechless" when Jesus presented them with truths. Even in the Rich Man Parable (Luke 16:19 ff), the rich man (Israel) begs for a little water (truth) for his tongue because he has no water of truth. He has no answers or explanations for what is happening. He is "dumb" -- meaning speechless.

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(4) Jesus didn't heal all of Israel. But he DID heal a remnant — as in the allegory of John 9. Thus (as in Daniel 9:24), Jesus anointed "the most holy" ones of Israel. But in this context of Matthew 12, we must remember that ALL of Israel is pictured — some healed, some temporarily given sight (but returning to their darkness), and some never seeing. Thus John the Baptist could prophesy that Jesus would baptize (immerse) some of them in the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost), and some in "fire" -- the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation in A.D. 70.

(5) This mixture of results is hinted at in Matthew 12:23, 24. Some were ready to be convinced that Jesus was Messiah! But some were determined to make him the demon!

(6) These factors now COMBINE to account for the MANY verses which intervene between the miracle of verse 22 and its explanatory-interpretation in verse 45.

### *THE INTERVENING VERSES*

Notice the first advent condemnation of Israel included in these verses of Chapter 12:

(25-29) Jesus explains that Israel does not understand the powers of good versus the powers of evil -- thus their "blindness." (Romans 11:25)

(30) Jesus points out that it is black and white. Either Israel will or will not be a follower or an opponent of Messiah.

(31, 32) Jesus points out that many in Israel were in great danger because they were coming close to denying the influences of the Holy Spirit in the life of Israel and in the miracles of Messiah.

(33) Jesus points out that Israel's fruitage is useless.

(34-37) Jesus gives a lesson in how Israel's teachers demonstrate the corruption of their character as a nation.

(38-41) Jesus points out that other peoples (whom Israel despised) were sensitive enough to the signs as to learn and repent. But "THIS GENERATION" (most of the first-advent Jews) didn't even have that advantage.

(42) Even strangers who visited Israel in the past recognized Israel's blessings under the TYPE of Jesus (Solomon). Those strangers will fare better in the kingdom than "THIS GENERATION" of Jews who had THE ANTITYPE of Solomon in their midst and couldn't recognize the fact.

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### *JESUS' EXPANSION CONCERNING HIS MIRACLE*

All of the intervening verses are there to make the one point that Israel was blind, and dumb, and demon-possessed nationally. Now Jesus returns to the interpretation of his one-verse healing miracle. Verses 43-45 are his explanation.

(43) Jesus is speaking of ISRAEL. Jesus' truths had, indeed, knocked the unclean spirit out of those in Israel who were willing (at least temporarily) to be healed. Many of the masses of Jews actually accepted Jesus as Messiah — only to fall back into their old thought and practice when he was crucified — or when he said things that confused them. Thus, Satan's influence had to take a "back seat" to Messiah's teachings and miracles while he was in the flesh. The demon was much like Israel in the Rich Man Parable. (Luke 16:19 *ff*) He was in a "waterless place." Israel is prophetically called the "dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2 and Haggai 2:6) The demon sought other possibilities — perhaps the saints! But "seeking rest, he findeth it not." He couldn't find a better place than Israel to serve his purposes during the entire Christian age.

(44) So what does he do? Once the Lord had abandoned Israel from spiritual consideration (Matthew 23:37-39), the demon had free reign to return to keeping Israel blind and dumb. As the verse says: "I will return into my house whence I came out." And what did he find? He found Israel "empty" — no powers of opposition to the demon's misinformation. He found it "swept" of the influences of Messiah. He found it "put in order" (NAS). In other words, it was just made newly ready for him to dominate during the entire diaspora of the ensuing 1800 years.

(45) Well, how long was this tragic deception of the Jews to last? It was to last until the seven stages of the Church had all been developed. (Revelation 2 & 3 and Romans 11:25) Thus the demon invites friends into the house — seven of them — possibly one to dominate during each of the seven periods of the Gospel Age while the Rich Man (Israel) is in "hell" (oblivion) nationally (Luke 16). This left Israel even worse than it had been when it was in its own land — "The last state of that man becometh worse than the first." To this very day, much of Israel's Biblical understanding has been tarnished and corrupted by Gentile and demonic errors! Many Jews now believe they have immortal souls and "go to heaven." Some believe in eternal torment. Many have given up on a Messiah. Indeed, their state is "worse than [at the] first."

Jesus ENDS the story by virtually saying: "THIS is what this whole demon-possession miracle was about. It is about the future fate of Israel from this generation forward." (Matthew 12:45)

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A SIDE NOTE: It is interesting to note that, contextually, there is a sort of continuation of the concept. In Matthew 13, Jesus offers seven parables, each of them sequentially

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being a prophecy of the seven Churches that would dominate the Gospel Age during the Jewish diaspora.

Consequently, Jesus progresses from Israel's Gospel Age fate to the Church's (and the apostasy's) Gospel Age fate — each in seven parts. In other words, the context of this little miracle keeps on expanding!

Because of this, 12:46-50 is a TRANSITION in which Jesus explains that his “family” is no longer his Jewish family, but it is those who (in the Gospel Age) “do the will of my Father” -- the Gospel Age saints (= Jesus' "Church").

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