

### Jesus Warned About the Danger of Depending on Self

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Jesus warned the scribes and Pharisees of their coming judgment if they failed to repent and turn from their sin. Jesus then went on to warn those men about the danger of trying to change in their own strength. That will be the focus of this topic.

Jesus had been warning the scribes and Pharisees about the danger of future judgment. As we begin this topic, we see that Jesus also warned them about the danger of trying to change through their own efforts. Matthew 12:43-45 says, “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.” Here, we see that Jesus warned the Pharisees that they could not change themselves.

Jesus had cast out a demon and the man was also healed so that he now both spoke and could see. The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. In contrast, Jesus went on to say that a demon could leave a person on his own temporarily, for a period of time, but warned that such a demon could later return. Demons are evil spirits and want to possess a body so that they can torment and destroy. Mark 1:26 says, “And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.” Mark 5:2-3 says, “And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains.” Mark 5:13 says, “And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.” In all three of these verses, we see demons tormenting and destroying.

We see that when a demon goes out of a person, instead of being cast out by Jesus, the demon may sooner or later return. Jesus said that a demon that has not taken possession of a body is seeking a place of rest but cannot find such a place. Here, we see that the demon can choose to return to the body that it had previously possessed. We see that when this demon came back, he found his former home empty, swept and put in order. Here, we see that the person out of whom the demon had gone had tried to improve his life by his own efforts. The Lord was not in his life. He had tried to make his life beautiful by his own works (sweeping and decorating it). The demon now saw that it was an ideal body in which he could again torment and destroy. However, he did not go back into that body alone. Instead, he took with him seven more evil spirits who were even more evil than himself.

With eight demons in his life, this man was in a much worse state than he had been when there

was just one demon in his life. Then, Jesus made a very key point when He said, “So shall it also be with this wicked generation.” Jesus was talking to and about the scribes and Pharisees. Here, we see that one of the ways that demons can torment and destroy is by causing a person to become very rigid and religious. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 describes such individuals when those verses say, “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” Here, we see that such individuals can be very religious. They are also deceitful. They have made it appear they are angels of light. However, in their hearts, they are filled with evil. Judas is an example of such an individual.

In Matthew 12:46-47, while Jesus was teaching, we see that His mother and brothers came. “While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” They stood outside the place where Jesus was and sent word that they would like to talk to Him. In Matthew 13:55-56, we see that Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters. Those verses say, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?” These brothers and sister were children of Mary that were born to Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus. As a result, Jesus was not a full brother, but rather a half-brother. In Luke 1:35, we read, “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” We see that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:24-25 tells us that Mary and Joseph did not have sexual relationships until after the birth of Jesus. As a result, these brothers and the sisters were all born after Jesus.

At this time, these brothers had not yet become followers of Jesus. John 7:5 says, “For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” Later, they did believe and become followers of Jesus because Acts 1:14 says, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” In fact, James later became a key leader at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Acts 15:13, and 15:18-19 say, “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men *and* brethren, listen to me... Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.’” When he finished Acts 15:22 adds, “Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, *namely*, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.” Still later, James and Judas (Jude) became the writers of the two New Testament books by their names.

Jesus received word that His mother and His brothers were outside and wanted to talk to Him. Instead of immediately going out to talk to them, Jesus gave a very important answer. Matthew 12:48-50 says, “But He answered and said to the one who told Him, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My

mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” Suddenly, we see, by the answer of Jesus, that He now had a much larger family because He now had a spiritual family as well as a physical family. Jesus still took His responsibility as a physical son because John 19:26-27 says, “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*.” One of His last acts, before He died on the cross, was to ask John to take over His responsibility to care for His physical mother. However, Jesus used the word “woman” instead of “mother” to show that they now had a different relationship.

Later, the brothers also understood that they had a different relationship with Jesus as a part of His spiritual family. James 1:1 says, “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.” Jude 1:1 says, “Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” Both of these brothers now considered themselves bondservants of Jesus Christ even though they were also his physical half-brothers. Their spiritual relationship with Jesus had become even more important to them than their physical relationship. In the same way, we are to understand our spiritual relationship; we have also become bondservants of Jesus Christ.

Jesus introduced that new relationship for all who become followers of Jesus when He asked the question about His mother and brothers and then pointed to His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” We learn several things about the new relation that we have with Jesus from the moment that we repent of our sin of unbelief and come to Jesus for salvation by faith. We have become the children of God. 1 John 3:1-2 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

We became a part of a new family, the family of God. Jesus now calls us His brethren. John 20:17 says, “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”” Hebrews 2:11 adds, “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” We are the sanctified who are now called brethren. That also means we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” This means we have become a part of both a spiritual family and also an eternal family.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand these blessings so that they can explain to others what it means to be a part of the family of God. This is so important, especially

for those who have not had loving physical families. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand their spiritual family.