

The Parable of the Empty House

Text : **Matt. 12: 38-45**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Read the Text ... Matt. 12: 38-45

B. Broader Context ... During Jesus' Galilean Ministry

1. Jesus has just reproached cities for not repenting in response to His preaching.
2. Jews accuse Him of casting out demons by the power of the demons.
3. Jews condemn because disciples pick heads of grain on the Sabbath.
4. Jesus rebuked their negative attitude.

*** The Jews leaders were looking for any reasons to reject Jesus.**

- He was from outside their system.
- He didn't tell them what they wanted to hear.
- He was a change agent and people resist change.

C. Immediate Context

1. Vs. 39 ... Show us a sign.

- a. They knew about His many miracles.
- b. They rejected Jesus' authority to rebuke them.
- c. They had not faith. Authority based on signs is based on sight -NOT- faith.

2. Vs. 40 ... The sign of Jonah

- a. Jesus foretold His own death, burial and resurrection.
- b. Jonah was a parable of Jesus. (3 days buried and then raised)
- c. The only sign Jonah worked was arriving in the sea monster's belly.

3. Vs. 41 ... Nineveh will condemn Israel

- a. They repented after hearing Jonah preach; they did not require a sign.
- b. Nineveh's repentance demonstrated their heart were soft ... Israel's was hard.
- c. Why condemn ? These were **gentiles** who had no background with God.

ILL. - When an average or poor student passes a test, there is no excuse for a bright student to fail. It's his own fault; he should've studied.

4. Vs. 42 ... Queen of Sheba will Condemn

- a. She traveled great distance over dangerous roads.
- b. When she saw, she believed.
- c. Why condemn ? Wisdom was brought to the Jews and they rejected it.

TRANSITION :

With this background we can understand this parable of the empty house.

I. Read ... Vs. 43-45

A. As with most parables, this one has two applications. (hearers + all others)

1. Vs. 45 ... It was told to “**this evil generation.**” (Jewish leaders)
 - a. They had responded to the preaching of John.
 - b. They had not changed their hearts and lives.

Compare ... James 1: 22-27 (read & exegete) UNSTAINED AND ACTIVE

2. Today when people respond to Christ:
 - a. They are swept clean of sin.
 - b. BUT they must fill the void with righteous values and actions.

B. The message is clear and simple.

1. True conversion requires that the Christian fill his heart and life with goodness.
2. The consequences of not doing so will result in a worse condition.

II. This is a very practical parable. It teaches us that :

A. Our Christianity cannot be based solely on the negative.

1. The Christians must clearly abstain from many things.
 - a. **Rom. 6: 1-2** ... shall we continue in sin ... God forbid
 - b. **I Cor. 5: 17** ... old things are passed away
 - c. **I Thess. 5:22, I Pet. 2:11, II Tim. 2: 19** ... abstain from all wickedness, lust & evil
2. Many describe their virtues in term of what they don't do;
 - a. I don't : smoke, drink liquor, swear.
 - b. I don't : gamble, steal, run around with wild women.
3. Others describe their faithfulness in terms of doctrines they don't accept :
 - a. Pre or post-millennialism, the rapture, Christ having to fight a literal battle
 - b. Sprinkling instead of baptism, original sin, faith only, instrumental music

B. The Christians must fill the void in his life left by sin.

1. Nature hates a vacuum. ... illustrate
2. Jesus says this is also true in the spiritual realm.

Remember ... Vs. 45 ... cf ... Jas. 1:22

3. Jesus called us to serve, not to be “agin it.”
 - a. Some are “born again, others are just born “agin it.”
 - b. **Rom. 6: 18-** “.. **having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**”
 - c. Many references to serving God / Christ :
 - 1) **Luke 9: 23 -cf- 14: 27** ... We must surrender our lives and follow Him daily.
 - 2) **John 12: 26** ... His servants must follow Him daily.
 - 3) **I Thes 1: 9** ... When we left the world, it was to serve the living God.
 - 4) **Rom. 12: 11** ... Christians are obligated to serve the Lord.
 - 5) **I Pet. 4: 10** ... Christians must serve one another.
 4. Salvation involves active obedience.
 - a. **Matt. 7: 21** ... Not everyone who advocate faith is saved, but those who “**DO THE WILL OF GOD.**”
 - b. **Remember ... James 1: 22** ... Hearers who do not apply what the hear from God’s word are only deceiving themselves.
- C. When the “**new things have come**” from God (**II Cor. 5: 17-18**), they produce the **fruit of righteousness in the Christian.**
1. **Phil. 1: 11-** **having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**
 2. The fruit of the spirit includes a complete personality makeover. (**Gal. 5**)
 - a. Evil is swept out : **immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, factions, envying, etc.**
 - b. The fruit that comes from God to replace evil is : **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control,**
 3. If the good has not replaced the evil, the evil will return.

III. The consequences of not replacing the evil with good is spiritually fatal.

- A. **Vs. 45** ... **When the evil returns the latter condition is worse than the first.**
 1. Jesus acknowledged the possibility of the evil spirit’s return.

Mark 9: 25- **When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.”**
 2. Certainly seven demons is worse than just one. (**Even demons have friends.**)

B. Peter referred to Christians becoming worse off than when they were first lost.

II Pet. 2: 20-22 ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

C. It's a worse condition because one has rejected the ONLY way he can be saved.

Read & briefly Exegete ... Heb. 6: 4-8

CONCLUSION :**A. Thus, it is important to all of us that we continually add furnishings to our spiritual house.**

1. This is why Jesus commanded us (**Mt. 28:20**) to teach new Christians after baptism.
2. It's why church leaders are commanded (**Eph 4:11-16**) to nurture Christians to maturity.
3. It's why individual Christians are commanded to grow to the point of teaching others.

Read & briefly Exegete ... Heb. 5:11 - 6: 3

B. Challenge all to grow.

1. Read daily. Then study. (Reading is not studying.)
2. Pray daily.
3. Seek out and do one good thing for God each day. (**at least**)

C. Those who move forward do not fall.

1. **II Pet. 1: 5-11** ... esp. 10-11
2. Evil cannot return to a house filled with righteousness.
3. Let each of us make a special effort to develop our faith this year.

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