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Sign of Jonah, Christs Brethren (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg delves into the "Sign of Jonah" in Matthew chapter 12, which he argues is a specific sign given to the generation. Gregg also discusses the timeline of Jesus' death and resurrection, addressing an apparent contradiction between the Gospels and Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 15. The segment concludes with a discussion of demonology and how the possession of the wicked generation will lead to a worse state than before.

Transcript

In Matthew chapter 12, we're going to pick up where we left off last time. We're running a little behind the printed schedule. We should have covered the remainder of chapter 12 yesterday, but I just couldn't resist the temptation to talk about all the things that were before it that were also in our scheduled material.

We need about twice as many sessions for the life of Christ as we've allowed, but we've already allowed 93 for the year, and we just don't have any more to give to it. We are in Matthew 12, and we're starting at verse 38. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.

I mean, what a ridiculous thing for them to say. They had just seen him cast a demon out of a man who was blind and dumb, and seen the man recover his sight in his speech. In fact, it was such a remarkable sign that they had to find some kind of far-fetched explanation of it that would take away from the obvious conclusion that he was working through the power of God.

So, having seen a sign certainly did not encourage faith in them. If anything, it encouraged blasphemy in them. When they see signs, because they're not interested in the truth that the sign is pointing to, they are almost forced into further disbelief and blasphemy, at least the last story we read earlier in the chapter seems to indicate that.

Anyway, they come at him again, Teacher, we want to see a sign from you. But he answered and said to them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days

and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh will rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And indeed, a greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

And indeed, a greater than Solomon is here. Now, you might think, wait a minute, didn't we just cover this? Are we going over old material again? We did mention, we did talk about verses 41 and 42 a couple of sessions back when we were talking about a similar statement he made back in chapter 11 about Chorazin and Netheia and Capernaum, how that they would find it less tolerable in the day of judgment than would Sodom and Tyre and Sidon, because of the signs that had been shown to that latter, to his own generation that had not been shown to the previous ones. And so there was a greater culpability, a greater guilt upon his own generation because they had had such an opportunity to believe, to see such signs.

He's saying something similar here, a little different, but we did bring up these verses in that place, and that's why they sound so familiar to your ears right now. Well, let's talk a little bit about the sign that he said they would get. He said the only specific sign that he's going to give that generation, but it should be sign enough certainly, would be that he would die and rise again.

Now, he didn't say it quite that bluntly. He didn't say, I'm going to die and rise again. He said, the bottom line in verse 40 is, the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Now, of course, in retrospect, we look back and we realize that's a reference to his burial. He was buried and dead, and they perhaps could have deduced that, but that might not be the only way his words could have been understood. Suffice it to say that at a time considerably later, it came as a shock to the disciples when he told them again that he was going to die and be buried and rise again in three days.

They apparently did not understand this particular statement in Matthew 12 well enough to anticipate a more blunt statement of the same fact in chapter 16 and in later places where he said it. Actually, there's three times after this that Jesus told his disciples that specifically, he says, we're going to Jerusalem. I'm going to be delivered over into the hands of the chief priests and the scribes.

They're going to kill me. I'll be crucified. I'm going to be dead, but I'll rise again on the third day.

He said that three times to them after this point. Now, of course, that was in private to

his disciples. Here, the statement is made to his opponents, not to his disciples, but certainly his disciples overheard it.

But it was not plain enough, at least for his disciples, to understand what it meant. But it is the first time, I think, that he's made any reference to his death in terms that should have been understandable. He did back earlier when he was talking to Nicodemus privately in chapter three of John, he said, well, as Moses raised up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up.

But that's a very ambiguous term. We're told later in John chapter 12 that when he spoke about the Son of Man being lifted up, he meant, he was signifying by what death he would die. It has reference to being hanged on a cross.

But again, we know that by retrospect. Those who heard such enigmatic statements as the Son of Man must be lifted up or he's going to spend three days in the heart of the earth or whatever, I mean, does that mean he's going to go hide in a cave for a while? I mean, it could mean that. The zealots, you know, in their battles against the Romans sometimes would take refuge in caves and that would actually be a very possible way of interpreting, you know, he's going to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, I mean, going down into a cavern or something.

They didn't understand he was talking about his death here. But we do. And we have a problem with it, actually.

Most Christians do. Because he said that he was going to spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Yet most of us are aware that traditionally Jesus died on a Friday, which is why we speak today, each year of a particular Friday called Good Friday, the day of his death.

And that he rose sometime around dawn Sunday. Now, one of the great problems that has perplexed Bible readers and thinkers for a long time is how it could be so that Jesus would die Friday and rise Sunday and yet somehow claim that he had been three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. It only takes a little bit of simple calculation to know that Friday and Friday night would make one day and one night.

Saturday and Saturday night would make a second day and a second night. Sunday morning, if he raised after dawn, would make a third day but where's the third night? Now, to solve this problem, a number of stratagems have been resorted to by Christians. Some have said, well, you know, maybe Jesus didn't die on Friday.

Maybe he died on Thursday. That way, Thursday and Thursday night would be one day and one night. Friday and Friday night would be a second day and night.

And Saturday and Saturday night would be a third day and night and he'd rise before dawn or something on Sunday. So, some have felt that Thursday is a better day for Jesus

to be crucified on to fulfill his own prediction here. Now, the basis of our belief that Jesus died on Friday is the very clear teaching in all the Gospels that it was the day that when he was on the cross, the next day was Sabbath.

Because that's why they broke the legs of the thieves and that's why Jesus was hurriedly buried without proper anointing and so forth because he died the day before Sabbath and they didn't want to keep the bodies on the cross over Sabbath so they hastened the death of the two thieves but found Jesus already dead, hastily buried him before sundown because Sabbath began at sundown. Now, obviously, if he was crucified the day before Sabbath, that would be Friday. Sabbath is a very important factor in the whole issue of the breaking of the legs of the thieves beside him and of his hasty burial and so forth is because of the imminent Sabbath.

And since Sabbath is Saturday, then his crucifixion must have been on Friday, it is deduced. Now, those who would like to make his crucifixion be on Thursday in order to satisfy the literal demands of this statement that he made about three days and three nights, they say, well, you know, it was Passover week when Jesus was crucified and in addition to the Saturday Sabbaths, the beginning and end of each festal week, whether it was Passover, Pentecost or Feast of Tabernacles, the first day and the last day were also Sabbaths, whether they fell on Saturdays or not. They might fall on a different day of the week every year, just like Christmas does today or something.

You know, I mean, you recall from having studied the Pentateuch that there would be a week-long Passover, for example, and the first and the last days of that week would be days in which there would be a holy convocation, no work could be done. In other words, although I don't think they're called Sabbaths in the Old Testament, they were essentially ipso facto Sabbaths. They were Sabbaths because you couldn't work and therefore it is thought maybe when it says that Jesus was crucified the day before the Sabbath, that this meant not the Saturday Sabbath, but perhaps Passover that week began or ended on a Friday, so that the Friday would be an additional Sabbath that week.

The Friday as the first day of the Passover week would be a Sabbath, and then of course the next day, which would be Saturday, would also be the normal Sabbath. And then there would be another Sabbath at the end of that week the next Friday, and they'd have sort of four Sabbaths in two weeks' time there in that case, and that's not an impossibility. It would then make it so that the day he was crucified might be on a Thursday, and the fact that it was before a Sabbath doesn't mean it was before Saturday, but before the particular Sabbath associated with that Passover week, which perhaps could be said to have been on Friday.

Anyway, this is all a stratagem to try to vindicate Christ for having apparently made a wrong prediction. If he was crucified on Friday and rose Sunday morning, then there's no

way he could have spent three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. You'd just lose the third night somewhere there, and you might even lose the third day if he rose before dawn on Sunday.

And I would like to suggest to you that there's a better way to solve the problem. For one thing, all the other times when Jesus predicted his burial and its duration, he gave a different figure with reference to the duration of his burial. In Matthew 16.21, it says, "...from that time Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day." He has to be killed and raised again the third day.

Now look over at Matthew 20.17, "...then Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and to crucify, and the third day he will rise again." Now look over at 1 Corinthians 15. Verse 4, Paul says, and this is of course after the fact, so he couldn't have mispredicted. He knew certainly the historical information by this time.

The resurrection of Christ was a matter of history. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15.4 that Jesus was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures, and of course also according to Jesus' own prediction. Now what I want to point out to you is that Jesus repeatedly, and Paul also, and everybody who spoke about it, said that Jesus would rise from the dead, or did rise from the dead, on the third day.

Now if you'll just think for a moment, if we take literally that he would be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, then what day would he rise? The fourth day. There's no way he could be three whole 24 hour days, three days and three nights literally in the grave, and still rise on the third day, because the third day would end in the third night. And so if he remained in the grave on the third night, any time after that would be the fourth day.

So you can't have it both ways. They can't both be literal. He either rose on the third day, in which case he could only have been in the grave for three days and two nights, which would agree with his being crucified on Friday, or he rose on the fourth day, after having spent three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, which would mean we'd have to make that a Thursday crucifixion.

Now, are you confused yet? I hope not. You understand what I've said so far? We can go on to the next step then. What I can say about it with certainty is this.

Before we draw any conclusions, these are the facts that are certain. Repeatedly, Jesus said he'd rise on the third day, and Paul, looking back, said that Jesus did rise on the third day. Since Jesus clearly rose on what's called the first day of the week, that's

Sunday, that would be the third day following Friday.

So Jesus must have been crucified on Friday if those accounts of him rising on the third day are true. See, if he was crucified on a Thursday and rose Sunday, that's the fourth day. So if he was crucified on Friday, which is the way it's always been understood that he was, Good Friday, and he rose Sunday morning, that'd be the third day, just like he said he would.

That makes good sense. But we still are left with the problem then of why did Jesus say three days and three nights, which would not be technically accurate. Well, I'd like to give you an answer to that, because people have often asked this question.

Maybe you have. If you haven't, someone may ask you someday. If you look over at Jonah chapter two, I'm sorry, chapter one, the last verse in chapter one.

Jonah 1, 17, right after Obadiah, which is obviously a very easy book to find. Okay, Matthew, Mark, Jonah. Okay, in Jonah 1 and verse 17 it says, Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Now, whatever else can be said about Jesus' statement, his statement that he'd be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights is exactly like the wording of Jonah, to which he appeals. He said, As Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Okay? Now, there is the possibility, as a starting point of thinking on this, that Jesus chose the expression three days and three nights, not for its literalness, but for its similarity with what it says about Jonah, and he's definitely making a comparison there, that what happened to Jonah was a type and a shadow of what would have happened to him.

And that Jonah's interment in the belly of the great fish was three days and three nights, those would be exact words of the Old Testament. Jesus might have simply transferred the same expression, not because of it being a literal description of the length of time it would be, but because that points to the comparison of what happened to Jonah. But that wouldn't be satisfying in itself without another bit of data.

It is now known beyond question, because archaeologists have found enough of the writings and so forth of the Middle East to know this, that in biblical times it was common enough for the Jews to speak, and for the Semitic people in general, to speak of a portion of a day as if it was a day and a night, that is, as if it was a whole day, and they'd even call it a day and a night, though it was not literally a day and a night at all. Now, we might object to this and say, Well, why would anyone speak that way? Well, I personally have trouble with it, but the fact remains that's how they spoke. There's no question about that.

This is not a theory. They have found, for example, quarantine records from the ancient Middle East. A quarantine, of course, is when a doctor requires a patient to be isolated for a period of time until his sickness has run its course so he doesn't infect other people.

They found ancient quarantine records that are said to be for five days and five nights, but then when the actual days are delineated, it turns out that it's really only three, what we'd call three full days and nights, and parts of a day before and parts of a day afterward, so there's really little parts of five days, but they call it, just as a matter of speaking, five days and five nights. Why this came to be a way of speaking, I cannot answer, but the fact that it was is undeniable. Therefore, when Jesus said three days and three nights, he would not necessarily expect his listeners to take him as literally in this expression as we modern Westerns would, in the way that his culture spoke about such things, for him to rise on the third day, that is after two days and two nights or three days and two nights, still because there's portions of three days involved there, a part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday.

It would not be out of keeping at all in the Jewish manner of expressing themselves to say three days and three nights, and especially if he was trying to draw a clear connection with Jonah, which used the same expression, that might be the thing that more than anything guided him to use the expression there, whereas he usually said on the third day, on the third day, on the third day. This is the only time in the Bible, Matthew 12, 40, the only time in the Bible that the expression three days and three nights is ever used of Jesus' time in the grave. All the other times say the third day, the third day, the third day, which is different.

And since Jesus usually said, I'm going to rise on the third day, but on this occasion did not, I think it's fair to suggest that he allowed the passage in Jonah, which he was comparing his own situation to, to guide him in his choice of words. Jonah said in the book that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights. And since that was to the Jews, a way of saying parts of three days, and that was accurate if taken in that non-literal sense that he used that term.

Now, some may feel this is grasping at straws, but I see no problem with it. In fact, there's, there's, there's a further confirmation that this is probably how we're to understand it. If you look at Matthew chapter 27, Matthew chapter 27, beginning with verse 62 says on the next day, this is after Jesus was buried, which followed the day of preparation, by the way, day of preparation, it is, it is now known from Jewish writings and Talmud and so forth that the word preparation was the official day for Friday or the name for Friday.

It was every Friday to the Jew was the day of preparation because of preparation for Saturday, the Sabbath, they had to get things ready to do no work the next day. And therefore the, whereas we call the, we call the sixth day of the week Friday. They called

the sixth day of the week, the day of preparation.

That was, that was as much a technical term for that day of the week as Friday is for us. So there's no question that the day was Friday. It was the day of preparation.

That's the, that's the Friday of the week. So on the next day, which followed the day of preparation, it followed Friday, this is Saturday morning, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate saying, sir, we remember while he was still alive, how that deceiver said after three days, I will rise. Now, after three days, I will rise.

Sounds like after three days of running the course, I'd be on the fourth day. Now, all the times that Jesus said, I will rise on the third day, he said it in the privacy to his disciples. The only time his enemies ever heard him speak on this wise, as far as the record would show was the case in Matthew 12.

We're talking about three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. His enemies, at least some of them apparently realized that he was claiming that he'd rise from the dead after three days or three days and three nights. But how did they understand it? Go on in verse 64, therefore, command that the tomb be made secure until the third day.

Well, why not until the fourth day, until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away. Now notice they were no doubt alluding to his statement in Matthew 12:40. He said he'd rise after three days, but the way they understood the meaning of that by their own Jewish idiom was, that means we've got to secure the tomb until the third day, because the third day falls within the scope of what a Jew would mean by three days and three nights.

So what I'm saying is, the Jewish usage is the way to understand why Jesus said it this way. And if one wished to take Jesus absolutely literally in the way that Westerners would, modern Westerners would take him literally when he said three days and three nights. Ancient Jews would not.

Then we have him lying when he said the third day, because it can't be three days and three nights in the tomb and rise on the third day at the same time. One of those two options has to be chosen, since the third day is the common way of speaking both before and after the event. Jesus usually said the third day.

The apostles looking back said he rose on the third day. Obviously that would be the correct figure. And it would be this one, which occurs only once, only in the passage where it's compared with Jonah, and where it clearly uses an idiom that Jews are known to have used, that Jesus is not contradicting himself, he's simply using an idiom that they would appreciate or understand a certain way differently than we do.

Okay, so in my opinion, to my satisfaction, that solves what appeared to be a problem on the face of it. He was crucified on Friday, spent actually two days in the tomb, not three

literal days, but parts of three days were occupied, and to the Jew, to say that was three days and three nights was quite acceptable. Yeah, John? It's hard to say.

They might have another way of expressing it to be more clear. Since the idiom would be ambiguous, they might have to clarify the exact day they intended to come back, you know, if that was something they needed to communicate. Like if a guy said to his wife, you know, I'm going on a business trip, I'm going to be gone five days and five nights.

Since that could mean, you know, literally five days and five nights, or it could mean only parts of five days, he might only miss three nights, or four nights, you know. Probably, you know, if he really wanted, if that was something he wished to communicate, clearly he'd probably have to say something a little differently. He might say, I'll be back on such and such a day, you know.

Right. Yeah. It wouldn't, you know, that expression would not be as readily understood as an exact duration period as it would to us, you know.

I mean, we would say that and it would be very clear what we meant. With them saying it means anything like parts of that many days. Anyway, by the way, a number of commentators and scholars have affirmed that.

That is certainly nothing I've come up with myself, but that is the way that they talk. Now, there's one other problem with this passage. It's not clear in the New King James because as it was in the King James, it caused a lot of problems.

In the King James version of verse 40, Matthew 12, 40, it says, As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale. Okay. Now, you'll notice the New King James has changed it to great fish.

Now, in translating a great fish, that agrees with what it says in Jonah. In Jonah 1, 17 says he was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. God prepared a great fish.

So there doesn't seem to be any contradiction. The problem is that back when people use the King James more, they encountered the translation in the belly of the whale. Now, technically, of course, a whale is not a fish.

You probably know enough about biology to know that a whale is a mammal and a fish is something else, a different class altogether. And therefore, many who were critics of the Bible, especially using the King James as their guide, felt there was a serious flaw, at least in the Bible and possibly in Jesus, that Jesus mistakenly thought that a whale was a fish, and it isn't. Yeah, what do you got there? Sea monster in what translation? New American Standard? Okay.

Yeah, it can be translated sea monster also. Yeah. That is an alternate translation.

The point to make is that the Greek word is ambiguous that Jesus used. It may be unfortunate that the early translators translated it whale, because probably it can mean whale, but it apparently is a Greek word that in ancient times had the flexibility of meaning a large sea animal. It could be a great fish.

It could be maybe a giant squid. It could be a sea monster, a sea serpent, a whale, whatever. I mean, any of those things might well be designated by the word that was used.

And unfortunately, perhaps, the King James translators chose, well, let's translate that whale, but forgot to check back and see that Jonah said it was a great fish. Now, a whale is not a great fish, and it was probably a translational problem more than anything that caused there to be an apparent contradiction. But those who are always looking for flaws in Jesus or in the Bible often pointed to this as a case in point of Jesus being wrong in a scientific fact, and therefore he couldn't have been inspired, could have been God, or else he would have known that a fish and a whale are not the same thing.

Now, I'd like to say something about that more. I honestly don't know whether whale or sea monster or great fish, I don't know which of those would be the better translation of the Greek word Jesus used. But even if it was found that whale is the best translation, even if the King James translators really hit it right, and modern translations have changed it in order to remove the embarrassment that existed in the King James conflict between whale and great fish, which is a possibility, even if it could be shown that Jesus used a word that technically and most probably does mean a whale, I still would fault the critics rather than Jesus, because whales are not classified as fishes by us moderns, but why not? Because we're guided by the taxonomical family trees of Linnaeus a few centuries back who decided to classify animals into different groups, and he classified whales as mammals.

Now, you might say, but whales, it's not an artificial classification, whales are mammals, they're not fish. Well, that depends on what you define as a fish, and what you define as a mammal. Now see, the reason we call a whale a mammal is because it shares some characteristics with other mammals, namely hair, warm blood, it nurses its young with milk, those are important characteristics, and humans and many other land animals do the same, and some other sea creatures do the same, and those are the criteria that taxonomists have decided that's what we're going to call a mammal.

An animal is a mammal if it does those things, if it has warm blood, hair, nurses its young. But you see, to make that particular selection of characteristics and say that is how we're going to classify these things as mammals is an arbitrary thing to a certain extent. For example, ancient people who are certainly not bound to follow Linnaeus' way of classifying things, they might have decided that anything that has a, that have body shape like a fish, that had fins instead of legs, you know, that was fully aquatic and lived

continually in the ocean, they could have called that a fish.

No one could fault them for it, it's not what we call a fish today. What I'm saying is the terminology that we take for granted has only been in place officially for a couple hundred years, and if ancient people wanted to broaden the perimeters of what they defined as a fish, that's their business. I mean, it could have been a whale in other words, and yet the Old Testament writers hundreds of years before Christ may have used the word great fish because to them they classified whales as fish.

That wasn't a scientific absurdity, it's just a different group of characteristics to decide what to classify them on. I would remind you that we don't call a mustard bush a tree either, but Jesus talked about the mustard tree. But is it not the right of any culture to decide what they want to call a tree and what they want to call a bush? I mean, we have to remember that we can't judge the language of ancient cultures by the range of meaning that we give to modern words in our own language.

And while it's true that by modern reckoning a whale is not a great fish, there's no reason why some other culture may have chosen to include whales and dolphins and any kind of aquatic animals whose bodies are not suited for land to put them under the general rubric of fish. They could do that if they want. After all, in the Old Testament in Leviticus, bats and flying insects are included under the general heading of fowl.

Did you notice that? I don't know if that was brought out by Phil when he taught Leviticus. You know, when they're talking about the clean and the unclean fowls, to us a fowl is a bird and a bat is a mammal, an insect is something else too. And yet anything that flew around they include under fowl.

So along with the unclean fowls, the unclean birds, they put in bats. Now again, that would technically be a bad classification by modern standards, but who's to say that an ancient culture would not be entitled to call anything that flew, anything that had wings instead of forelimbs, call it a bird. However they want to use their language as their business, not ours.

It's for us to decide not whether they used it rightly, but figure out how they did use it and understand what they meant. But what I'm saying is people are so picky that they don't really think through these things as they ought to. It's true, a whale and a great fish are not the same thing by the way we speak today.

But even if Jesus did use a term that identified the creature that swallowed Jonah as a whale, that is what we know to be a mammal. There's nothing that would forbid the ancient Jews from including that under the general heading of great fish. I mean, they could do that and they wouldn't be, there's no one who could say that we have some kind of absolute set of classification that all generations had to acknowledge or, you know, that reality is to be judged by.

It's arbitrary really. I mean, we could, if we wanted to, we could make creatures that walk upright, put them all in one class. If that's the characteristic we thought was important, so ostriches and people would be in the same class, we'd be more like birds than like most mammals, since mammals don't walk upright, generally speaking, birds do.

We could classify humans as birds if the important characteristic we were using for birds was that they walk upright on two legs, you know. I mean, that might not seem to be as good as classifying them in terms of feathers and eggs, you know, in which case we're not birds. But anyway, I'm just a little upset with the way that Western scientific people sometimes impose their modern standards on ancient peoples as if modern Western culture is the only culture that has any validity and the way we think and talk is the only way that anyone, you know, everyone can be judged at all times or whether they talked and thought the way we do or not.

Okay, well anyway, I got that on my crawl, let's get going here. Let's go on to verse 43. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, Jesus said, 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 be with this wicked generation. Now, verses 43 through 45, exclusive of the last line of 45, sound like a crash course in demonology.

You know, there's not very many things taught about demonology in the Bible. The existence of demons is assumed. The phenomenon of demon possession is spoken of as if everyone knows it's there.

And there's no teaching on the subject. There's virtually no teaching on the subject of where demons came from, what it is they do, what the perimeters of their activities are, what the principal symptoms are. You know, we get those kinds of things from the anecdotal material.

It's there, oh, here's a case and these symptoms were present and here's those and these ones. You know, we can kind of deduce things, but as far as the Bible sitting down and saying, let me tell you a bit about demons here. No one does that.

Jesus doesn't do that most of the time. The apostles never do that. But here he appears to.

Here he says, let me tell you something about demonic behavior, how demons themselves behave. When a demon goes out of a man, when they're exercised, out of a

man, you know, the curious thing would be, since you can't see me, wonder where they went. Are they around still? What happens to them? Well, he says they go, they travel through dry areas, waterless places, seeking rest, seeking a new home presumably.

And if they don't find rest, they come back to the home they left, the person they left. And if that person is empty, that is if there's a void there, if there's, if there's room for the demon to move back in, then that's what they'll do. In fact, they won't come alone.

They'll say, hey, there's an opening here. I'll bring all my other friends who've been wandering restless through waterless places looking for a home. I'll have them over.

And we'll set up a boarding house here. And so the person ends up with seven times as bad as circumstances before. Now, there's several levels at which this passage can be approached.

One is just at the face value, what it's teaching. Secondly is what are its implications about demon possession? And the third is what was the purpose of bringing it up here? Let's talk about the first level. What, when an unclean spirit goes out of man, that's self-explanatory.

We know that Jesus cast demons out of people. So we know that, you know, when they were cast out, they went out. But what happens next? They go through dry places.

Well, why dry places? I think the King James says waterless places, as if they're, as if they are, you know, deliberately avoiding water. What are the demons more at home in desert places? Is there something about water that, you know, freaks them out or something? I mean, I don't know. We're not told.

What is meant by dry places? Is this meant in the literal sense of like desert areas or does it mean spiritually dry? I don't know the answer to that either. Interesting that Jesus doesn't make it clearer. But they go through dry places and they're seeking rest.

Well, what constitutes for them rest? Does that mean they have to go into another part, another body, an animal perhaps, like the demons begged Jesus to send them into the swine rather than to the abyss or out of the country? Now, if the demons have such an aversion to water, why did they drive the pigs into the water when they were in them? You know, that's a good question too, I suppose. But I, those are questions we're not to be able to answer. Although this appears to be a teaching on demonology, it leaves more things unanswered than it answers.

In fact, it hardly answers anything at all. It has a different function, I would like to suggest to you, than to teach us what demons do. But I think it's true nonetheless.

I think he's given an illustration of what really does happen. Somehow demons need rest. Apparently, that rest is found in inhabiting a human body.

Now, why that would be restful to them? Why they would be ill at ease? Why would they not be at rest if they're not in a body? We have no answer to that. There is simply no biblical answer given. I've heard theories.

I remember hearing Catherine Kuhlman, who should have restrained herself from teaching. I heard her once in Anaheim say that the demons are fallen angels, which of course is a common enough view, although the Bible doesn't say it's true, but enough evangelicals think that to, you know, I wouldn't brand her as a heretic for saying that. But she says they are fallen angels, but she says angels have bodies like we do.

And she said when the demons fell and the angels fell, one of the things that in their becoming demons was that they were deprived of their physical bodies. And now they felt naked and they were never satisfied until they inhabited a physical body, because they used to have a physical body. And they just can't be happy until they're in a physical body, and that's why they possess people and stuff.

Well, you know, apart from the fact that that's entirely a matter of speculation, and yet wasn't represented as speculation, it was represented as it was canon doctrine, you know. The fact that the idea of angels having bodies is totally without biblical warrant. It's true that sometimes angels appeared in a physical form, but so did Jesus before he was incarnate, but that doesn't mean he had a body when he's in heaven.

I think it just means that on occasions it was possible to materialize for, in order to function with humans. There's certainly no teaching in the Bible that angels have bodies. In fact, if anything, when Jesus said a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have, which is what Jesus said in Luke chapter 24 to his disciples about himself, about his resurrection, he says spirit doesn't have flesh and bones as you see me have.

And yet Paul, the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 1.14, angels are ministering spirits. I think putting those two together would suggest that angels don't have bodies. But if they do or don't, certainly the Bible doesn't explicitly dwell on that or tell us, and so she was guessing.

She was trying to find a psychological cause for demons wanting to be in people, and she figured, maybe they'd have been deprived of their bodies. The problem is she didn't say this is a maybe or my opinion. She acted as if it was what the Bible teaches, which is far from the case.

Anyway, I even wonder whether it's true that demons feel some compulsion to be in a body. I mean, I don't know if they do or not, but judging from their behavior, it would seem like they don't. Once they come into a body, at least biblically speaking, sometimes they kill the body.

They try to throw the body into fire or water to destroy it. In the case of the boy that

Jesus delivered at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, whenever a demonic fit came upon him, he was suicidal. Obviously, if he died, the demon would have to come out.

Demons get no pleasure out of living in a dead body, as near as I can tell. Or when they were thrown into the pigs by Jesus, why did they kill the pigs? These are things that, I don't know, we can't read too much between the lines, but it makes me at least wonder about the proposition that demons always want to be in a body. It seems like it'd be to their advantage if they were in a body and were obsessed with being in a body that they would try to keep the body alive, not kill it, so that they could stay there and not have to go looking for another one.

Jesus doesn't specifically say they go looking for another body to inhabit. He says they go looking for rest. I suggested the possibility that rest for them is in another person, inhabiting another body, but that's not stated.

So again, there's more mystery. It's almost as if we know more about the demons before the Bible says anything about them. Once it says things, new questions and mysteries arise that we never even wondered about before.

And I don't know, I'm simply pointing out how little is said and how enigmatic and mysterious what Jesus says is. The fact that he doesn't say it more clearly indicates that he's not trying to give us a crash course in demons. He's giving this illustration for another purpose for another lesson, as he makes clear at the end of verse 45.

But he says, when the demon to the house he was out of, namely the person that he came out of, and finds that house empty, swept, and put in order. Now, empty is usually considered to be the important word here. Vacancy is there.

Swept and put in order may not have much to do with anything, except that perhaps it's saying that when the person has been delivered, he's gotten his act together. He's gotten his life ordered properly. When he was demonized, he was perhaps insane and undisciplined and wild and messy and so forth, like the man in the tombs.

Remember when Jesus cast the legion out of that man? It says that the neighboring people came and they found him sitting clothed and in his right mind. In other words, his house was in order. It hadn't been before.

He was orderly. He was in his right mind and so forth. Now, when a demon goes out of a person, that may result in the person's behavior getting more orderly, getting cleaned up.

They may actually become respectable people. But the problem is, being respectable and orderly and self-disciplined isn't enough if you're also empty. I would follow most evangelicals in their interpretation of this to understand this to mean that if the demon goes out of a person, that person is vulnerable to being possessed again, only worse,

unless they fill that void with Jesus or with the Spirit of God.

That a person is delivered from demons, no favor has been done to them unless they also become a Christian. If they become a Christian and filled with the Spirit, then the demon, if it returns, will not find the house empty. The demon will come knocking and the Holy Spirit will answer.

Sorry, no vacancy. And that is what I understand to be suggested here. Although it's far from stated, it's generally assumed by Christians to be implied and I think it's a fair assumption.

Now, in the event that a person is delivered from a demon and does not become a Christian or does not walk in the Spirit, is not filled with the Spirit, then that demon may come back and find the house empty and come back and that person be in a worse condition than before. Now, look with me, if you would. Well, no, let's not look there.

Let's just, we will look there in a moment. Look at the last line of verse 45. So also shall it be with this wicked generation.

What in the world has that line got to do with what he's just been saying? It sounds like he's talking about people and demons and demon possession and deliverance and, you know, falling into a worse state afterwards. But he says all of that to make this point. He gives it almost, it functions almost like a parable.

You know, over in Matthew 18, Jesus tells the parable about the king who forgave someone a great debt and the person refused to forgive a fellow servant of a small debt, so the king threw the guy over to tormentors, right? You've heard me talk about that before. But after Jesus tells that parable, he says, so also shall my father do to you if you don't forgive one another. He tells a story and he says, now here's why I told it.

The story really has to do with this situation. I mean, this is a, this story is true to life, but the point I'm making really is applicable to what I want to say here. This is the application.

So shall it be with you. In this case, he tells this whole thing about demons going and coming and so forth, and then he says, and so shall it be with this generation. Now, what comparison is he seeking to make here? What, what, what is it about his generation that can be compared to a man who had a demon cast out, but refuses to fill the vacancy so that his latter state becomes far worse than before? That is, he becomes possessed by greater and more demons than ever before.

And by the way, seven demons worse than himself is in verse 45, not necessarily a statistical number. We know from Proverbs and Psalms and, and many places in the scripture, the number seven is often non-literal. It just means a full number.

And so what are you saying? He gets a lot of demons. I mean, seven may be statistically accurate, but it needn't be. It's just the guy gets a lot, he's a lot worse off.

Worse demons and more come in to fill the void. Now I'd like to suggest this, this as the interpretation. He specifically says, this man that he just described, who had a demon go out and come back with more buddies, that man is like his own generation.

Now a little earlier in chapter 11, he was comparing his own generation with some other things like children who refused to be humored by one type of play or by another. Now he's likening his generation to not children, but to a man, a man who when Jesus came to him was possessed. But Jesus has come and driven the demon up.

The question now is what will the man do with Jesus? If the wrong choice is made, then that man who has experienced temporary relief is going to find that he's in far worse condition, invaded by hordes of demons at a later date, and his latter end will be worse than if Jesus had never come to him in the first place. Now having put it that way, there's probably some obvious, some obvious connections we can make. Jesus operating among his generation was doing them a great service, casting demons out of demon-possessed people, healing sick people, shedding light on...