

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 101

April 9, 2021

Welcome to another edition of “The Mind of Christ”. We are in **Section 61** if you are following A. T. Robertson’s “**Harmony of the Gospels**”. This is a very interesting section. We will probably take this in two parts because it’s rather long and complicated and so we are going to jump right into that today.

If you are joining us for the first time, we are making our way through the Gospels; everything Jesus said and everything Jesus did so that we can understand how Jesus thinks so we can learn how to think like Him and have the mind of Christ. We’re going to jump back into this section which is found in two of the gospels; in Mark and in Matthew. I want to begin with Mark 3 and will read only part of the text because we won’t get through all of it anyway.

Mark 3:20-27

²⁰ And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. ²¹ When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.” ²² The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.” ²³ And He called them to Himself and He began speaking to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ “If a house is divided against itself that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! ²⁷ “But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man; and then he will plunder his house.

Matthew 12:22-29

²² Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?” ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.” ²⁵ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

So let’s start with that much of the text here. Again, we’re in Section 61 following A. T. Robertson’s “Harmony of the Gospels”. This *section includes some serious teaching and some very difficult teaching*. The “unforgivable sin” seems so ominous; especially in view of what Jesus is willing to forgive. He forgives people who have committed heinous crimes; rape, murder, etc. but “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” is *unforgivable*. This is a deep section regarding “The Mind of Christ”. The occasion is a good place to start.

Mark and Matthew give different accounts, though compatible. Mark says Jesus is home; I assume this means that He is in Capernaum either at Peter's house or his own house. Mark says that He is trying to eat but the crowds would not leave Him alone enough for him even to do so. Matthew says He is presented with a demon-possessed man who is *blind* and *dumb*. The man is healed and there are, according to Mark, two other groups interested in Jesus ... His people who are interested in Him assuming His *relatives* who want to "take custody" of Him; and the *Scribes* from Jerusalem although Matthew says *Pharisees*. Matthew says that He healed the demon-possessed man so that he could now see and talk. At his point in Jesus' ministry this is not unusual, although I guess if you were there it would be pretty unusual to you.

The multitudes responded, again, with appropriate amazement. They were amazed at what He did. Their back-handed statement though was "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" Why did the crowds use this *designation* on this occasion ... the Son of David?

The idea of Jesus being "the Son of David" is expressed several times in the book of Matthew. First of all, it is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in **Matthew 1:1**. In **Matthew 1:20** Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, was the son of David. In **Matthew 9:27** two blind men called Him the son of David. As Jesus went on from there, two men who were blind followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" In **Matthew 15:22** says a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely demon-possessed." In **Matthew 20:30-31** there were two blind men who called out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" Then in **Matthew 21:9** as Jesus was making His way into the City of Jerusalem, the crowds called Him "the Son of David". And there were children in the Temple in **Matthew 21:15** who also called Him the Son of David. Then in **Matthew 22:42** Jesus asked whose son is the Christ? "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." The Pharisees rightly answered that the Messiah was the Son of David.

Paul stresses this in **Romans 1:3** as to Jesus' fleshly descent. ¹ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was *born of a descendant of David according to the flesh*, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ" The phrase is certainly connected to the idea *of the Messiah*. God did narrow down the lineage of Jesus *in the days of David*, first from Abraham; and then to David. Now, it was clear for the next 1,000 years that the Messiah would be a descendant of David.

Thus, *the opening line of Matthew is*, "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham". The crowds allowed this possibility that Jesus might be the Messiah, *but the Scribes and the Pharisees wanted to shut this idea down!* The person of "David" evoked ideas of military conquest and religious zeal among the Jews.

David is one of those ‘bigger than life’ individual because of his *personality*, his *devotion to God*, and even because of his *glaring sins*, as well his successes in *expanding the borders* of Israel and by ushering in a *time of peace* that was enjoyed by his son Solomon. David, also, was the driving force behind the Temple though Solomon was actually the one who built it. David wrote most of the Psalms, he was king; he was literally a rock star, a military leader extraordinaire full of scandal, to keep everyone’s attention. He was a shepherd to connect him with the common man, he was a romantic lover, and he was very quick to run into danger, into battle. He captured the attention of a nation for 1,000 years!

Mark says Jesus’ own people tried to take custody of Him. **Mark 3:21** says, “When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.” This was because they heard He was ‘**obsessed**’, which the Pharisees later turned into “**possessed**” to the point of not even being able to eat. The text says that they wanted to “**seize**” Him. The word “seize” is the word “kratasai” from the word “krateo” (κρατεω). It’s a word used in **Matthew 14:3** about John being arrested, or **Matthew 18:28** when one slave seizes another for not paying a debt, and in **Matthew 21:46** they tried to seize Jesus. His family wanted to literally ‘take control of’ Him. They thought He had lost His senses. In other words, they thought he was ‘put out of his wits’; that He was *literally insane*, He was beside Himself!

Sometimes, I guess devotion to God appears to others as ‘insanity’. This is really a bizarre scene that we’re witnessing here. The most sane Person who ever lived, and the most in-control Person of all time, was thought to be insane, and thought to be in need of someone taking control of Him! That’s just bizarre. How far man’s thinking is from God’s thinking. Here was Jesus taking control of evil spirits, the leaders thought He was under the control of Beelzebub and the relatives thought that He was just “**mad**”, all because, why? Because He cared about people and He had the power to do something about it.

It mentions Beelzebub here. Beelzebub is the chief of the demons ... Baal Zebub, god of Ekron or Philistia, ‘the lord of the fly’, ‘the god who dispels flies’. Thus Jesus, casting out demons, in their words, “by a demon” is like a *fly* casting out another *fly*. *They ascribe to Jesus a supreme possession. This is no ordinary demon* but the ruler of the prince of demons! This speaks to the idea of a hierarchy within the unseen world and the power that seems always present there.

A much debated question is Jesus’ authority or power. They could not deny “*what He did*” so the only other thing they “could do” was to attack the legitimacy of what He did. **Who** is backing Jesus? Of course, if God is, then they better listen up; but if not God, then *who else* has the authority or power to do these miracles? They felt there was only one choice; an unseen, evil power because there are only two sides – “*good*” or “*evil*”. So, what is happening here is **pivotal** to this earthly battle that is being waged.

Jesus knew their thoughts and He “called” them to Himself. Perhaps just a ‘logistics matter’ like, ‘gather around’, but it reminds me of His invitation for others to come unto Him or to follow Him. Just like with Simon, Jesus knows what those around Him are thinking. Was this “miracle”, or was this “perception”? I’m not sure how to know but either way, it points to Jesus’ concern to not just address what is expressed or on the surface, but also to go deeper into the heart and to address the real issue.

I attempt to do this as well. I want to understand what is real in someone's heart as much as it is possible. And when we know the real "**core issue**" **then** we can make some progress. In this case, Jesus applies some logic to help them see that He is not insane, and that it simply does not make sense to believe that Satan is at war with himself and with his followers. ***How can anyone win a war when he is destroying his own army?*** In **Mark 3:23**, Jesus' opening line is, "**How can Satan cast out Satan?**" He wants to make clear to the crowds that their leaders take positions that are ridiculous! Jesus always acknowledged the world of evil, and He called it for what it is. ***Jesus did not sugarcoat 'Hell' or 'Satan'***. He knew neither should be misrepresented nor minimized. He also acknowledged that He and we are at war; a spiritual, cosmic battle to win men to capture and control and to subdue souls or to free and to liberate and allow participation with the Divine.

The goals of the combatants could not be more stark! The stakes could not be higher. Satan is about possession, ownership and control; he is obsessed with power over others, especially God's crowning creation. He cannot control God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit, but he is able to gain control over their followers, or as Revelation 12 puts it, "their offspring". Satan is evangelistic except his good news is ***not good*** but only appears to be good news, dressed up in lies and painted with lead paint! It is a slight of hand, a magic trick, a farce or a ruse.

Jesus talks of the nature of division. Division in an army is counterproductive. Jesus actually puts division in the context of a kingdom or a house. ***The subject of unity and division is huge in scripture.*** God's mystery is unity of all men; Jew and Gentile by His Son. Read Ephesians 2 and 3. Jesus prays for unity or oneness in **John 17**. The measure of unity is the type of unity that God and Jesus have! In this context, if Satan works against himself, he cannot stand. His purposes and goals cannot be obtained by division! ***Get the picture*** ... Satan cast out Satan. How does one "throw himself out"? There has to be an outside force or authority acting on the one being thrown out!

This raises, for me, a relationship between Satan and demons. There are two views as to who these demons are; what is their nature? ***Either they are fallen angels*** like Satan or they are the ***spirits of evil men*** roaming the lower regions seeking homes until the judgment. Either way, they are under the control of Satan. Satan has gained leadership over them and to "***cast them out***" is to cast out Satan himself.

What does the term "stand" mean in **Mark 3:26** and **Matthew 12:25-26**, if a kingdom cannot "stand"? "**If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?**" The word is histemi (ιστημι), a prolonged form of steo (σταο). It means "**to stand**". It's a rich word that is used very often in Scripture. It is used in a similar context in **Ephesians 6:11, 13** about ***taking a "stand" against the forces of evil.*** So if a kingdom is divided against itself it cannot stand, but if one comes up against an opposing force, he must "make a stand"! ***Division leads to a fall.*** Figuratively, to "***stand fast***" means to continue, to endure, to persist. Kingdoms to not continue, do not endure or persist if they are divided. The maintenance of unity is essential to success in any endeavor. It cannot be overrated. Jesus' thinking is solidly clear on this.

In **Matthew 12:25**, Jesus uses the term "laid waste". "**And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house**

divided against itself will not stand”. It describes the kingdom which is divided against itself. The word here for “laid waste” is *eremos* (ερημος), a word that means lone, abandoned to ruin, or to waste. It is uninhabited, brought to ruin, much like a city would be abandoned if it were attacked. We see modern day cities being bombed out, laid waste. It’s the same context as in **Luke 11:17**. In **Revelation 17:16** the ten horns of the beast are to make the harlot desolate; and this is talking about Babylon, or Rome in this case, being laid desolate. In **Revelation 18:16-19** it is again talking about the fall of Rome. In **Matt. 24:15** it’s used regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and there it’s talking about the abomination that causes desolation or to lay at waste.

Regarding Rome and Jerusalem, their being “*laid waste*” was not just natural consequences, but a *deliberate punishment* by God for their actions. But did God use their natural divisions to bring about this desolation? I’m reading a biography of Jerusalem (at the time I was writing this in 2012) and it’s filled with example after example of division over who will control this city. Most of the control was for religious purposes. Muslims, and Christians and Jews all laid claim to the city and there is division among these; even among those claiming to be Christians, the Orthodox versus the Roman Christians and the Protestant Christians. All these different forms of Christianity were divided; and under this intense division over the centuries, Jerusalem has been at various times in its history “laid waste”.

Back in **Mark 3:25** Jesus mentions a house divided. “If a house is divided against itself; that house will not be able to stand.” Lincoln used this often in the days of the Civil War. He knew that the U. S. could not be truly united unless we all agreed on how we would treat everyone in this country. Slavery divided us and had to be done away with or we would not have been able to stand. We would have been a nation “laid waste” or cast upon the dung heap of history. *But sometimes houses have to “be divided” so that the kingdom will stand.* Jesus discusses this in **Matthew 10:34**; He did not come to bring peace, but a sword. A man’s relatives will become his enemies *because of Jesus!* He is the only unifying factor. He is the flagpole, the rallying point, the center. *Superficial unity will not do.* Family peace not grounded on Jesus is temporal and meaningless, and a mirage. If it means division to get to peace, on solid ground, then so be it, but we must be careful how we apply this.

I didn’t know when I wrote this back in 2012 that last line yesterday, what this day would bring; what it would hold in regard to a family that I was meeting with in crisis. I challenged them as a couple to take “The Love Challenge” and they accepted the challenge well. Unity is not just about ‘not being divided against ourselves’, but also pursuing peace productively and wisely.

In Mark’s account, Jesus uses the term “rises up”. **Mark 3:26** says, “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!” The idea, again, is “to stand up”, it means “to arise”, or “to lift up to raise again”. We can compare this word with the word *histemi*. When the dead rise up; metaphorically, to raise up, to cause to exist or to cause to appear. It is used in **Matthew 12:41** of the people of Nineveh who will stand up in judgment like someone testifying against another. Attorneys try to avoid surprise testimony which goes against their case. **Matthew 22:24** is about raising up children. **Matthew 26:62** is about people testifying against Jesus; so these are people who “*stand up*” against Him.

It is used many times in Mark to refer to the resurrection; that Jesus will raise up people; He will stand them up. John uses it as Jesus raising us up at *the last day*. And Hebrews speaks of a new High Priest who is raised up or arises (**Hebrews 7:11; 15**). Not only can Satan not stand, he is “finished”, literally, an end; in other words, He is at his end. **Mark 3:26**, “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!” The word for “end” is telos (τελος) meaning termination, the limit, a thing ceases to be, the same word for customs or a poll tax. It’s applied as a termination point of a shipment; the end of a shipment. **Romans 6:21-22**, “Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.” It speaks of outcomes. **Romans 10:4** says, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Christ is the termination point of the law. **He is “the end” of the law.** **1 Corinthians 15:24** “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, ²⁴ then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.” The word “end” is used in **2 Corinthians 11:15** where it speaks of **Satan’s servants whose end will be what they deserve**. Then in **Philippians 3:19**, “that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ *whose end is destruction*, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.” **Hebrews 6:8** “the end is but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed and it ends up *being burned*.” I’m showing you the outcomes of these different ends, if you will. **For saints, the outcome is salvation.** **1 Peter 1:9** says, “... obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” In **1 Peter 4:17**, *the outcome for the disobedient is talked about*. “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

Matthew takes Jesus’ statement to the idea of the sons of the Pharisees casting out demons and He asks them by what power do they do so? Now, His point is, why would the Pharisees attribute the power of Beelzebub to Jesus and not to *their own* “sons” when they are doing the same thing? He is getting at the idea of motive. What is the motive of accusing Jesus of something and then not accusing “their own sons” of the same thing? What motive can they have for such a horrible conclusion? We’ll come back to this shortly.

What are these “sons” of the Pharisees; who are they and what of their practice of exorcism? Wayne Jackson in the Christian Courier online has an article, “***Were the Pharisees Able to Exorcise Demons?***” He concludes that they could not because such supernatural actions were meant to confirm the truthfulness of the speaker, and the Pharisees did not speak truth. See **Mark 8:15**, “And He was giving orders to them saying, “Watch out! ***Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.***”

He also points out that many may claim to cast out demons, **Matthew 7:22-3**, but they are simply workers of iniquity. In **Acts 19:13** Luke mentions some Jewish exorcists who went from place to place. They attempted to cast out evil spirits by using the name of the Lord Jesus. They would say things like “I adjure you by the name of the Lord Jesus who Paul preaches”. This didn’t turn out very well for them if you read the account. The demons knew Jesus and they knew Paul, but they didn’t know these men! “**And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.**”

So Wayne Jackson says Jesus was not saying that they actually did drive out demons, but even if they claimed to do so, by whom do they claim to do it? Why would the Pharisees not challenge their ‘sons’ as to their power to cast out demons and yet question Jesus? What was their motive? These very ‘sons’, possibly disciples of the Pharisees are their judges. He did this with Sodom previously, when He said that Sodom would be an unexpected judge or witness against them in the Day of Judgment. We must be careful or God might call a witness against us. Jesus, truly, is the master apologist.

It seems that **Matthew 12:28**, is pivotal. Here *Jesus reveals the true nature and source of Kingdom power*, the Holy Spirit saying, “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” *Kingdom authority is linked to the work of the Holy Spirit*. Later we will see that the unforgivable sin is *to speak against the Holy Spirit*. So, why is this a tie between Kingdom and Spirit so essential with such grave consequences if opposed?

Skipping ahead, Jesus says, “But if I cast out demons by the *finger of God*, (and again, this will come later in another section; we’re going to combine **section 106** and **Section 61** here), But Jesus says, “If I cast out demons by the *finger of God*, the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” *If we combine these two statements, then we see that Jesus equates the “Spirit of God” with the “finger of God”*. (That’s in **Luke 12:20**). The “finger of God” is mentioned three times in the Old Testament. In **Exodus 8:19**, the plagues were *the finger of God* and Pharaoh hardened his heart ten times and was unable to come to repentance, thus cutting himself off from forgiveness.

Now, *get this point!* If we are going to understand the *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*, we have to understand the nature of the “finger of God”. So again, in **Exodus 8:19** the plagues were caused by the “finger of God”. *Notice Pharaoh*; how did he respond to these plagues by “the finger of God” ... *he hardened his heart ten times* and he was unable to come to a point of repentance, thus he cut himself off from having any forgiveness from God.

Exodus 31:18 and **Deuteronomy 9:10** associates the “finger of God” with the tablets of stone that Moses received. They were written by the very “*finger of God*”.

Then in **2 Corinthians 3:1ff** makes the point that under the New Covenant, it is not “tablets of stone” but “tablets of the human heart”, and God writes not with ink, but with “*the Spirit of the living God*”. It says, “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

In the Old Testament, the “finger of God” wrote into stone – a very hard surface external to the people; but now the Spirit writes on soft hearts if at all. Pharaoh’s heart was hard, resisting the “finger of God”. The reason why blasphemy of the Spirit cannot be forgiven is because to reject Him and His work on the heart prevents the rule of God in that heart. 2 Corinthians 3:16 says that when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is lifted and the Spirit is able to do His work in our lives. All of these concepts are interrelated.

Based on this, how does the “Kingdom come” relate to the work of the Spirit? Quoting **Jeremiah 31:33** and **Hebrews 8:10** it says the New Covenant will be written on the heart. This is done by the Spirit. *Jesus provides salvation but the Spirit administers it.* The Spirit applies it to our lives and continues to do so within us, continuing to affirm and confirm our personal salvation through His testimony. His witness is essential to our relationship; it says that the three testify; **1 John 5:7-8** *the water, the blood and the Spirit.*

Jesus, by the Spirit’s power, was freeing people from what binds them. Even the sacrifice of Jesus was done with the aid of the Spirit (**Hebrews 9:14**) *and* in the resurrection. *Spirit power is instrumental in all aspects of salvation.* To deny it or to assign it to someone or something else is to strip the Gospel of if its power. What is a kingdom without power and authority? What is a king without power to reign? *The critical work and role of the Spirit is being acknowledged by Jesus* and the Pharisees have just made a critical mistake.

In what way has the kingdom of God come upon these people since He has cast out this demon out of this man? Jesus is using this kind of in a “federal sense” of Him being a representative of them all. In other words, when Jesus cast out the demons from this individual, He’s showing them the pattern; the role by which all men have salvation that comes to them; and it is by the work of the Holy Spirit. So, in **Acts 2** when the Spirit was poured out on those in Jerusalem, it was as if He was being poured out on all of mankind. These people to whom Jesus was talking were in the midst of Spirit Power, the Kingdom activity and work, yet they didn’t recognize it or acknowledge it. *They even went one step further to reassign what they experienced to the likes of Beelzebub!* What an insult! What an insult!

Later in **Hebrews 10:26ff** of those who continue to sin after receiving a knowledge of the truth, one reality is “insulting the Spirit of grace”. The convicting work of the Spirit, if not heeded, leads to hardness that leads to death.

Both Matthew and Mark mentioned “the strong man”. **Matthew 12:29** says, “Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man?” In **Mark 3:27** he says, “But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man; and then he will plunder his house.” They are slightly different but not significantly.

The essence of Jesus’ questioning is that *one person has to subdue another to rob him* and a strong man requires a stronger man for the job. The strength of demons is demonstrated in the New Testament. One is that one who lived in the graveyard. Do you remember how he could not be subdued even with chains (**Mark 5:1 ff**)? Verse 4 says “... *no one was strong enough to subdue him.*” Recognition of authority and power within the Spiritual Realm is essential to the battle. *There is a war going on, and we have to choose the right or the winning side.*

It reminds me of Jesus’ conversation with Pilate about this. Pilate thought he had power over Jesus, but Jesus knew that there were many levels of power above Pilate’s pay-grade. The One standing by Pilate had been given **all power** and **all authority** in heaven and on earth. This power was not merely physical or political, but moral and spiritual.

Is the strong man in this parable Satan? Is Jesus teaching a general principal only, or something more specific? In this case, Jesus has clearly neutralized or bound the demon. The idea of change is interesting. Look that up. In **Acts 12:6ff** Peter was bound with chains which fell off at God's word! In **Acts 16** the same happened with Paul and Silas. The reaction of the soldiers in **Acts 22:29** upon learning that Paul was a Roman citizen who had been chained ... they immediately were afraid and they let him go. Why; because of power in his citizenship.

Later Paul gloried in his chains in **Ephesians 6:20**. The house of Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chains in **2 Timothy 1:16**. In **Revelation 20:1** a great chain was in the hand of the angel to bind Satan, the dragon, and he was bound for 1,000 years to prevent him from deceiving the nations. While he is bound, Jesus is plundering his house and carrying off those he has controlled. See **2 Peter 2:4** and **Jude verse 6**.

Much of the imagery in the New Testament is about *battle, force* and *warfare*. There is a contest going on. **Luke** speaks of 'counting the cost' if you go to war with insufficient force in **Luke 14:28-32**. Paul reminds us where the real battle is. It's not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities of this world. Revelation is built on warfare images. There are plans and schemes and mystery in the great conflict. Heavenly beings fight in the heavenly realms and we are caught up in this battle. *There is a battle going on in the mind. Each of us has a weakness and the combination of satanic influences and our own evil desires work to exploit that weakness.*

The weakness, almost always, has a mental component; the way we think or manage our emotions, earthly influences, substances, unresolved issues, isolation and cognitive distortions. All of these are ways in which we are overcome. After I had written that back in 2012, later I did a sermon that addressed those five earthly influences or the five ways we are assaulted in this war.

In our text, it is about *possession*. In James 4 conflict is described as "wanting something you do not have and trying to get it in illegitimate ways. Both Jesus and Satan want something; the **same thing**, actually ... *they want Lordship over humans!* But Satan takes illegitimate means to get control of us. He tricks us, he tempts us into traps, he promises what he cannot deliver, he lies to us; yet Jesus tells us the **truth!** He persuades us; He offers deliverable promises and preserves our free will to choose. Jesus never makes us do anything. He makes a way for us to have what we really want or desire for ourselves; that is freedom and fulfillment and fellowship. *Learning the nature of the battle is essential to winning it! Thank God that Jesus is stronger than the evil one.*

It's hard to imagine the mind of Satan. That's scary ... the most intelligent and crafty criminal mind ever to exist. To think he is plotting to bring *me* down is terrifying without partnership with the most intelligent and righteous mind ever to exist. What is this contest that we are in the middle of? Some days it is like I have stumbled into the middle of the ring in a fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier; or more like I am trapped in a cage fight in the World Wrestling Federation. Matthew adds in **12:30**, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters." To not decide is to decide; to not choose is to choose.

Following Jesus is a conscious choice to be with Him. There is no neutral in Jesus' thinking. So, what does it mean to be "*with Jesus*"? There is certainly a sense in which with me does not mean "*with me*". **Matthew 26:23** says, "*He who dips his hand with Me in the dish 'with me' will betray Me.*" He asked the disciples in the garden to keep watch "*with me*" and they slept. He said, "Could you not keep watch '*with me*' for one hour?" In **Mark 6:31** Jesus invited His disciples to come "*with Him*" into a quiet place. In **Luke 15:6, 9** Jesus seeks us to rejoice "with Him" in what was found. In **Luke 15:31** the older son was reminded that he was always with the father and all that the father had was his. In **Luke 23:43** the repentant thief was promised to be "with Jesus" in paradise.

In **John 8:29** Jesus has the assurance that the One who sent Him, the Father, is "with Him". When Peter refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet, he was told he could have no part with **Jesus**. This terrified Peter as it should us (**John 13:8**). In **John 14:3** Jesus is preparing a place for us to be "with Him". In **John 14:23** He will make His home "*with us*". *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode "with him".* In **John 16:32** when His disciples scatter the Father will remain "*with Jesus*". In **John 17:24** he says, "*Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*"

So, being "with Jesus" carries with it several truths.

1. We are with Him in the first place because God makes it possible and allows it. We are a gift, if you will, to Jesus.
2. The place is "where I am". Wherever Jesus is, this is where we need to spend time "with Him." Not wherever "we are". Does He meet us where we are? Yes. But then He draws us to be where He is.
3. One purpose of being "with Jesus" is to be able to behold His glory which God gave Jesus. Not to be taken the wrong way but we get 'with someone' and 'do something' (like watch a movie or watch a sunset or watch a concert), but Jesus wants to take us to the greatest event of all time. It never gets old, never runs out of excitement, never goes out of style or gets cancelled or replaced or edited. Ringling may have had the Greatest Show on Earth, but nothing can compete with what we will see when we are finally "with Jesus" and we see His glory ... glory generated by God's love for Him long before the world was created.

This is a thrilling promise and prospect. I just want to be where you are, as the song says. *Is that enough for us; to be so in love with Jesus that the hope of seeing Him sustains us through anything?*

This week I am preaching on "fulfillment" which is Jesus' terminus in "The Way It Works" series. The "fulfillment" is not only God's work in history heading towards a fulfillment; but "fulfillment" is what proceeds from the heart of God for each person and is made possible only through God's work in Christ. If we live unfulfilled lives now and with even greater hope for the future, then something is missing in our understanding and in our devotion.

The idea of Jesus saying “if you’re with me”; what are you going to experience if you are with me. The opposite of that is the scattering phrase. It reminds me of the kids raking leaves. Either they are working to pick them up and get them in the bag, or they’re playing in them. They make *more* work; they undo work that has already been done. I just realized how significant this verse is in my life ... or this principle. I get very frustrated over those who make more work for those working hard.

Many people take advantage of those who try to help. They receive one’s time, money and energy in the attempt to make their lives better, but then tend to drift right back into chaos. For some, order or “gathering”, (when you gather something up), cannot or will not be sustained or maintained. Trying to organize someone who refuses to follow a plan is exhausting.

This what the Hebrew writer meant in **Hebrews 13:17**. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” The principle is so clear; too many miss it by their apathy or procrastination or selfishness or inattention. I have had this idea stuck in my head for a few days; that some people have the idea that some things are not applicable to them. In other words, someone who doesn’t think the words of Jesus apply to them; *they don’t think that the norm applies to them, that somehow they are the exception to the rules*. They think that the rules apply to others but not to me. *These are scatterers*. These are people who scatter. The word scatter has an interesting definition; those who are routed or terror-stricken or driven by some other impulses; they fly in every direction. So if you see a fleeing army, they’re being scattered. If you see people running in terror, they’re being scattered. It can be positive as in scattering abroad, for instance the Gospel, or blessing. It’s the same context as in **Luke 11:23**. In **John 10:12** it is the wolf who scatters the sheep when the hired hand flees. He also snatches them. Jesus predicts in **John 16:32** that His disciples will be scattered each to his own home and will leave Him alone (but obviously His Father was with Him.) In **2 Corinthians 9:9** Jesus scattered abroad giving His gifts to the poor.

The opposite of scattering is to bring things together, to collect, to assemble something. In **Matthew 3:12** Jesus is gathering the wheat into his barns, and the chaff will be burned up. In **Matthew 13:30** the wheat is first gathered, and in **Matthew 13:47** is the gathering of fish into nets. So, here is the idea of Jesus talking about the scattering or the gathering. *Which one are we doing?* Are we scatterers; are we making messes, or are we gathering things together; binding things together? If someone is casting out devils by Beelzebub then they’re scattering themselves; they’re not gathering. Jesus is using this as an illustration of how ridiculous it is for them to think that He is working against Himself, that He is frustrating His own plans.

There is so much more here. We’ve got more to cover but we’ll stop here for today and pick up where we left off next time. Thank you for joining us. If you go to our website at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/> you’ll find all of our messages and recordings archived from the past year now. Feel free to go back and pick up where we first began in this study of the Mind of Christ. We didn’t record in the very beginning; but we have from the beginning of the pandemic March 2020. I encourage you to look deeply into His mind so you can learn to be more like Jesus. Thanks for joining us today and God bless.

