

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 103

April 23, 2021

Welcome to another edition of The Mind of Christ. We are making our way through everything Jesus said everything Jesus did. We are following A. T. Robertson's book, "The Harmony of the Gospels" and he has divided the life of Christ in chronological order into sections. We are in Section 62 today, and we're going to be looking at **Matthew 12:38-45**. This section is recorded only in Matthew so we only have one Scripture to read and I'll be reading from the New American Standard Bible.

Matthew 12:38-45

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An **evil** and **adulterous** generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

⁴³ "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the **last** state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

That's our text, so let's dig into the Mind of Christ and see why He said what He said here.

The occasion of this section is some Scribes and Pharisees asked to see a sign from Jesus. Jesus' response contains several parts. In the first part, He addresses their motive for asking. Secondly, there is a connection between Jonah and the resurrection. Thirdly, Nineveh, in opposition to Jesus' generation repented, whereas Jesus' generation for the most part, did not. Then the fourth part is the Queen of the South in opposition to Jesus' generation because she travelled some distance to listen and was very responsive to what she heard on that occasion. And then, the last part that Jesus deals with is the demons that left home and then they came back, and what that means as far as the present generation was concerned.

Well, Jesus is very blunt and He minces no words in addressing the Jewish leaders. He is clear. He knows this is no honest inquiry; He knows this is not a struggle of faith. This is not a people on the verge of belief who just need a little more push like Thomas did. These were hostile skeptics, enemies, antagonists who need to be exposed ... called out. Jesus knows their motives are evil and adulterous. By defining them as a part of an evil and adulterous generation, Jesus immediately puts them on notice that He knows what they are up to. They are not fooling Him. This is no innocent request and He is no man's monkey to perform tricks for their amusement.

Jesus uses two phrases here; the phrase evil generation and the phrase adulterous generation. These are straightforward terms. He has just explained that “evil” speaks “evil” and produces “evil fruit” in the previous section that we looked at. The root word for evil is “poneros” ($\pi\sigma\nu\rho\sigma\zeta$) and means full of labors, annoyances, hardships, harassed by, laborious, bringing toils, causing pain and troubles, of a bad nature and condition, to be diseased or blind. Ethically, evil means this word means evil, wicked or bad. It is used 72 times in the New Testament; 23 times by Matthew himself.

There's a basic idea in this; that evils cause labor and hardship. Remember the curse of evil in the Book of Genesis was labor; excessive work that was going to be required.

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸ “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” See **Genesis 3:17-19**.

There's a passage in the Old Testament, I believe in the book of Isaiah (**57:20-21**) that says, “**But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud.** ²¹ “**There is no peace,**” says my God, “**for the wicked.**” NASB 1995

So, evil people are harassed, helpless and so always laboring in their toil under the sun has no value ... so that's the nature of evil here.

The other word, adulterous is “moichalis” ($\mu\sigma\chi\alpha\lambda\iota\zeta$) means adulterous, unfaithful, unclean or apostate. It is used in **Matthew 16:4**, “**An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah**” in the same way it is used here. In **Mark 8:38**, those ashamed of Jesus are adulterous. **Romans 7:3** says that when a woman's husband dies and she marries again, she is not an adulteress. In **James 4:4** Friendship with the world is adultery. “**You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?**” In **1 Peter 2:14** Peter mentions there are evil people whose eyes are full of adultery.

The New American Standard Bible says that they “**craved**” for a sign. Other translations said that they “**sought after**” or they “**seek**” a sign. The word here is a word that means seek, or to make a search for, to require, to demand, to desire, to endeavor, to obtain. It means to seek with care and even with anxiety. The word is “epizeteo” ($\epsilon\pi\iota\zeta\eta\tau\epsilon\omega$) is something that someone is earnestly seeking for; they're looking intently for this sign. In **Acts 12:19** Herod searched for Peter after his escape from prison. In **Matthew 16:4**, again, this word is used for people seeking a sign. In **Romans 11:7** it says, “**what Israel sought she did not obtain, but the chosen obtained it and the rest were hardened!**” In other words, when people are seeking something and they don't get it, many times they become hardened. Sometimes there are people who are not seeking it nearly as hard, if you will, and they find it. So, it's a word used in those contexts. **Hebrews 11:14** says that those who know that they are strangers and aliens on earth; they are seeking a country of their own. That's a good thing to be seeking.

In **Matthew 6:32** the Gentiles eagerly seek the material things of life; and we, by contrast, are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**). Seeking is not bad, depending on what you are seeking after. In this context they were seeking after a sign.

Could Jesus have been thinking that these folks seek signs and not seek Him? Do we simply seek the wrong things? If our focus is on the miracles God can do for us, we miss the point! ***It is God that we seek.*** **Psalm 27:4** says, “One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.” We need to gaze upon His beauty.

Well, what do *we* crave? ***That's the question. What do we crave? What do we seek?*** **Philippians 3:8** is a good place to go to look at this. For Paul, it was to know Christ; to know Him. Just to be with Him. There is no greater treasure to search for and here the treasure is before them, but they want to see another treasure map. In other words, here is Jesus; who IS the treasure. He's right there before them, they can have Him, they can acknowledge Him, they can enjoy the treasure of Him; but on the other hand, what they continue to ask for is another treasure map; give us one more map; give us one more way to find what we're seeking; when Jesus is saying, “Look. I'm right here.”

The idea of a sign means a mark or a token by which anything is known or distinguished. It is *proof* or *evidence*, a convincing token of something that will lead you to a conclusion; a sign. Jesus has done hundreds of miracles up to this point in His ministry; a sufficient number to **prove** His identity. ***Yet they want more!*** They want one more. Surely this is not a serious search for the Messiah! They wanted God to show up but kept checking His credentials at the door to see if He were ***truly*** the One that God was sending into the world.

God and Jesus don't need credentials or a pat down to get in! Does the president have to go through security at the airport? ***Mere men asking Jesus for another form of ID is what this amounts to!*** It's insulting. Jesus doesn't need another form of ID. He has presented all the evidence that is needed for His identity.

Jesus lumps these Scribes and Pharisees in with the ‘present generation’. It must be okay to do this when there is a prevailing spirit or wind or culture that is broader than just a few individuals, then you can compare and say, “This is what this generation is like.” Culturally it is the way many or most are. Like in Titus where it talks about Cretans always are liars. That doesn't mean that every single Cretan (people from the Isle of Crete) is a liar but there are enough of them that you can characterize all of them that way.

To think like Jesus we need to understand the prevailing winds of culture. So Jesus did that. That's how He thought. He looked at the culture and He began to label it and describe it in certain ways. ***We need to be smart enough to know what our culture is like!*** Instead of giving one more new sign, Jesus points to an *old sign*, Jonah the prophet. In doing so, **Jesus gives validity to the Book of Jonah and to the story that's told there!** Jesus interprets Jonah literally ... Jonah and the Sea Monster, as he is called in the NASB. The word here is “*katos*” (κητος); a huge fish; a gaping for prey. What to fish do? They swim along with their mouths open gaping in search of prey. This could be a whale, suggested from the root word “chasma” (χασμα) meaning chasm, a yawn, a gulf or something providing a vacancy.

It's surely something to swallow a man whole and allow him to stay alive for three days and three nights. It must have been a monster. It was a monster fish ... it was very large.

The three days and three nights seem to cause trouble in getting the timeline for Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. So Jonah's three days and three nights in the belly of the fish or the monster, is compared to Jesus' three days and three nights in the belly of the earth.

How do we reconcile that if He died at 3 P. M. on Friday afternoon and He was buried before 6 P. M. on that same day when their Sabbath started, it started on Saturday and He rose early on Sunday morning? He was only in the tomb for one full day (24-hour period) and two parts of a day, and the last part being a very small part of that day on Sunday. So this is why some put his death on Wednesday; so that you can get a full three 24-hour periods of time that He was actually in the tomb. *Or, we can look at it as the Jews did; that was that any part of a day, or a year, was enough to speak of it as a full day or year.*

But this does suggest that we may not be taking it all "literally" as we say. But when we commonly speak in a way, and that way means a 'particular' thing to us, then we must interpret it according to that meaning. So, there are colloquialisms; ways in which we talk. One of them is when people say, "Give me a couple of minutes". Well, they don't mean literally two minutes. They mean, "Give me a short period of time to get ready." So it's not to be taken literally because if it was you would be ticking off the seconds to two minutes! So this takes into account figures of speech, but regardless of the timeline, the fact is that Jonah spent time inside a large fish and it spat him out at the end of this three day period. It was something like a resurrection and it serves as a sign for the generation in which Jesus lived, and I would say even for 'our generation'.

There are, of course, notable differences between Jesus and Jonah. Jonah was a reluctant prophet. He did not want Gentiles to repent; at least not while 'he' was preaching. Jonah was disobedient and he ran. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and He steadily made His way to the cross and willingly entered the grave knowing that God would not allow His Holy One to see decay. Jesus came out in victory and light; Jonah came out of the fish in shame and, excuse my language, puke. Yet God could use old Jonah as the sign for His Son's resurrection.

Jesus calls the tomb "the **heart** of the earth". It seems like a fitting phrase. He always gets to the **heart** of everything. Like David, He was "after God's own heart" and He also touched "the heart of the earth". Did those Scribes and Pharisees "get it"? Probably not ... just like they did not get the idea of Him tearing down the Temple and rebuilding it in three days; but there was enough here for them to put a seal and a guard on the tomb to attempt to prevent any Jonah-like event from occurring.

Jesus again mentions witnesses for the prosecution who will show up at the judgment and will testify against His generation. This picture surely got their pulse rate and blood pressure up. There dirty, unclean, ancient Gentiles were more sensitive to God's Word than the Jews of Jesus' day. "Behold something greater than Jonah is here", Jesus says. Jesus is the greater thing! These Old Testament events do not compare in greatness to what was happening in this generation; the generation in which Jesus lived!

But these leaders were blind to this. ***They could not see the visitation of God who came down to man.*** There is this word “**behold**” again. This word is used many times in the gospels. **Behold** is used to call attention to something. In **Matthew 1:23** we read, “**Behold, the virgin shall be with child who will be called Emmanuel, God with us.**” Here, standing before the Jewish leaders was “**God with us**” and they wanted to see another trick! How can we be so shallow?

I just want to note a third “something greater than” statement in **Matthew 12:6**. “**But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.**” So this idea of something greater is used a third time, in **Matthew 12:6** … a **good three-point sermon**. Jesus is greater than the **Temple, greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon**. I’m always looking for a sermon. So there’s a three-point sermon.

The Queen of the South who came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon’s wisdom is a story recorded in **1 Kings 10:1**. It says, “Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, **she came to test him with difficult questions.**”² So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, (all of the people who came with her) with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart.³ Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her.

So they must have spent quite a bit of time together as Solomon tutored her in the ways of the Lord. The text goes on to say that although skeptical at first, then it goes on and says:

⁴ When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,⁵ the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, **there was no more spirit in her.**

Does this mean that there was no more resistance to the words of Solomon; that she lost her skepticism? She praised Solomon and she marveled at his wisdom. The half has not been told. She blessed his men and servants because they could continually hear his wisdom.

⁶ Then she said to the king, “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. ⁷ Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. ⁸ How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.

Then she gave this statement:

⁹ “Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.”

These are ***the Queen of Sheba’s words***. This is how she responded to Solomon. **What an example this woman was to the people of Jesus’ day.**

¹⁰ She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great amount of spices and precious stones. Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon.”

They exchanged gifts and she returned to her home.

In **2 Chronicles 9:4** instead of “no more spirit in her” it literally says, “***She was breathless***”. In verse 6 she says, “**And behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me. You surpass the report that I heard.**” This is amazing. And now compare this to Jesus’ generation!

The story of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon is so fitting of a contrast between Solomon and Jesus. Here is a Gentile traveling hundreds of miles not on modern conveyance but by crude means with dozens of servants and much “stuff”. Her aim was to see if what she had heard was true. Who was this ‘Solomon’ who had built this magnificent Temple to his God and was reported to be rich and powerful and wise? She “had” to see with her eyes, and to hear with her ears. She put her desires into action and set off on an adventure, the adventure of her lifetime, never to be forgotten. She came somewhat skeptical thinking the stories she heard were embellished, but she learned because she was open-minded to the truth that the half had not been told. Solomon took her breath away with his answers and his wisdom and his administration of justice and righteousness. He caused her to, if you will, ‘swoon’; he caused her to open her pocketbook and give. She was overtaken by what she experienced. The contrast could not be greater.

Jesus also had skeptics before Him but they did not come to sit at His feet and listen to His wisdom. They did not come to open their minds to His truth! This ***living descendant of Solomon and Kind David*** did not have the appearance of either Solomon **nor** David. He was simple and plain and humble. These Jewish leaders were not good judges of greatness. Man has trouble with this. We think greatness is found in outward signs; the car we drive, the size of our buildings, the numbers who attend, the bells and the whistles and we miss ***what we have before us. True greatness must be perceived differently.*** Jesus was not merely an administrator of righteousness; ***He was the righteousness of God and He did demonstrate God's justice!***

Jesus has another illustration of the evil generation in which He lived. These illustrations are about appropriate responses to a ***Holy Jesus***. This generation did not act appropriately. Much of Jesus’ ministry was about freeing people from bondage; even bondage to evil spirits.

In **Matthew 12:43** it says, it simply says that the evil spirit goes out of a man. “**Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it.**” How does this happen; voluntarily or under coercion? ***Remember the larger context*** in verse **22** and following. It was the healing of a demon-possessed man. The discussion is about where Jesus got the power to do this! Jesus tells them it is Holy Spirit power that allowed Him to bind the strong man and plunder his house. But once Jesus has cleansed this house and cast out the unclean spirits, and they go out looking for new residences, what happens next?

We learn something about these unclean spirits ... they are looking for rest, a place to hang their hats, a place to live. It is the spirit who looks in ‘waterless places’. Why? Why waterless places? Well, I’m not really sure. It sounds like a desert to me. And what makes a man a fitting residence for the spirits? It seems they cannot merely indwell and possess at will. It seems that they’re looking for ***men whose hearts are unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.*** Does this not describe the Pharisees?

They **do not** have God’s word in their hearts. They don’t have God’s Son sitting at the table of their hearts eating and drinking with them. Their hearts are ***empty***, far from God (Matthew 15). Their hearts are swept clean by their own efforts. They have cleaned up their own lives by their own discipline, and they establish their own order with rules taught by men. So, they felt no need to ask Jesus to come in and to fill their lives, so they were vulnerable. They are like an abandoned house to a bunch of drug addicts. They have a vacancy sign out front and the unclean spirits take them up on it. It seems emptiness is created when we do the work and leave Jesus out of the equation.

Another thought struck me. Why did this man’s life need to be swept and put in order? It was the evil spirit who messed the place up, but it was the evil spirit who was attracted to the clean house. Maybe **that’s** the way evil spirits are. They like nice clean lives with no mess but when they get there, they won’t and can’t keep these same lives clean. They foul their own living area.

Also notice the evil spirit claims the house, or the man’s heart, as his own! **Then** it says, “I will return to “my” house, from which “I” came. It seems like evil spirits get comfortable and do not like change. They get accustomed to a certain place, and they say there is no place like home. But his unclean spirit is not content to sneak back in and set up shop alone! He has seven buddies he takes in. Perhaps he found them on the street while he was out looking for a new place to live! And maybe since Jesus came along and reclaimed His houses or hearts, there was a ‘housing shortage’. The spirits had fewer places where they could live. Could these seven have been the ones cast out of Mary Magdalene?

There also seems to be a pecking order, or degrees of wickedness, among the demons. Of course, sin is sin, and one unforgiven sin is enough, but we do recognize degrees of wickedness and by the amount of fruit produced and the nature of that fruit. In jail, a pedophile is the lowest on the pecking order considered detestably wicked even by his peers. They may have murdered someone but they can’t stand someone who molests children.

Wherever the demons go, when they move into the neighborhood the property values suddenly go down but where Jesus moves into the neighborhood, the property values go up. ***What if this were true of Christians moving into a neighborhood?***

Jesus says the evil spirits “live there”. ***They live there.*** The Greek word is “katoikeo”, (κατοικεω) meaning to house permanently, to reside, to dwell to inhabit. They are settling down. In **Matthew 2:23** Jesus’ family resided in Nazareth. I’m going to show you some places where the word “reside” is found.

In **Matthew 4:12** Jesus moved to Capernaum (or lived in Capernaum). In **Acts 1:20** regarding Judas he said, “Let his homestead be made desolate and let no man dwell in it. His office let another man take.” In other words, he’s no longer going to occupy that office. In **Acts 7:4** regarding Abraham, he settled in a place called “Haran”. In **Hebrews 11:9** it talks about dwelling in tents and in **Revelation 3:10** it talks of God testing those who dwell on the Earth. So there is a dwelling place used metaphorically here, in this story of these evil spirits having a dwelling place, they have a place to live.

In **Acts 7:48** it says “**However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands**” regarding Solomon’s Temple. ⁴⁹“**HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL.**” Then in **Acts 17:24** it says that God “does not dwell in temples made by hands,” or in **Ephesians 3:17** it says, “**Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**” “The fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus in bodily form” according to **Colossians 1:19** and **Colossians 2:9**. Then in **James 4:5** the spirit dwelling in a man; “**he has jealously desired the spirit which was made to dwell in us.**” In **2 Peter 3:13** speaks of the righteous dwelling in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

There seems to be this idea of ‘needing a place to live’. There’s a place to call home, and these evil spirits found their place in this house or in the heart that had been swept clean and put in order. It is of logical necessity that we occupy space; everything has to be somewhere. ***Our heart is a space that must be filled. Something or Someone will live there.*** An empty space invites ‘filling’. We do not do ‘void’ well.

God saw the earth was formless and void and He filled it in six days and got it all organized; swept clean and put in order. He told man, ‘Occupy it. Fill it with beings like themselves.’ But ***Satan stepped into the hearts of Adam and Eve and occupied the space reserved for God alone. He then redirected the population of the earth until it was filled with those who were evil and God preserved it through Noah and his family.***

Jesus refers to the last state of that man being worse than the first. **Matthew 12:24** says, “**Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.**”

The word “last” is “eschatos” ($\varepsilon\sigma\chi\alpha\tau\omega\zeta$) from which we get our word “eschatology” … “the study of the last days or last times.” It means farthest or final of a place or a time; it’s where something ends up; it’s the last, the latter end, the lowest or the uttermost. It’s the end of something. When it refers to a place, (**Acts 1:8**) it is referring to the uttermost parts of the earth. In **Acts 13:47** Jesus’ light to the Gentiles was to bring salvation to the “ends of the earth”. In **Deuteronomy 28:49** “the nation of Israel’s destruction will come from the ends of the earth”. If we don’t go and convert them, they may come and destroy us. **Isaiah 48:20** says, “Send the message of redemption to the end of the earth after you escape Babylon.” **Jeremiah 16:19** prophesies, “Nations will come from the ends of the earth to confess the futility of idolatry.”

This whole idea that ***the last state is worse than the first*** is ‘the end condition’; it’s where things come out in regard to time, as opposed to space or place.

In the parable in **Matthew 20:8-16** it's the last person hired. It can be a state of condition as in **Matthew 27:64** they told Pilate that if the disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and ***the last deception will be worse than the first.***" See also **Luke 11:26**, "Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

2 Peter 2:20-22, "For if they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with 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.'" **This is very important to understanding what Jesus is saying** here in Matthew 12.

It's because if we escape the defilements of the world, and then we become entangled in them again, the last state is worse than the first state! It is better to never have known Jesus, than to have known Him and then to go back to the defilements of the world.

Various passages refer to the "last times" or the "last days", so I'm not going to go into that aspect of how this word is used. One who is caught in the constant drama of ***starting and quitting; beginning and not finishing; saying and not doing; promising and not fulfilling*** becomes weaker and less likely to overcome **but to "be" overcome!**

Which is better: to live with one demon or to live with that one and seven buddies who are meaner than he is? It is worse because it requires more power to exorcize the demons. In **Mark 9:29**, Jesus told His disciples, "**This one comes out only by prayer and fasting.**" ***Man's faith becomes weaker and he loses his will to fight.*** The King had arrived and they did not recognize Him, and did not invite Him in so that the enemy seized the opportunity.

At the risk of being repetitive, if we look back on **Matthew 12:22-45** we see a ***context for truth or reality.*** The contrast centers in authority and identity. In this section He is referred to by the crowds as 'the Son of David' and by the leaders as 'Teacher'. ***Jesus identifies along with the leaders, other authorities; that is Satan and Beelzebub. Jesus also introduces the Spirit of God as a power by which demons are cast out.*** Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man and the leaders as a brood of vipers. He also identifies Himself as greater than Jonah and Solomon.

If we're going to figure out the truth or reality we have to know the players in relationship to one another. Jesus, among other things, helps sort this out for us. Also, when one tries to understand how business gets done in the universe, especially as it pertains to the unseen world, we need a lot of help. Man has many theories in this area and drawing the wrong conclusion or starting with the wrong premise can be spiritually deadly! ***Jesus is our 'truth' tour guide. He has no illusions as to demons, Satan, worldly leaders or even characters of a particular generation. He knows who they are.*** He is a Spiritual Naturalist taking us through the woods the riverbanks, the scrub lands and identifying the different species of plants and animals we encounter!

He is the supernatural environmentalist to let us know how everything fits together! He is the only One who knows this and the only One who can explain this to us. So, we must choose our tour guide carefully or risk getting a lot of misinformation. We must be like the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South. They connected to God's source of truth, humbled themselves and learned and changed. They experienced the dynamics of the Kingdom when it comes upon a person or upon a nation. They were conquered by it; they were subjugated to it, they were incorporated into it, and they experienced a change of citizenship. God's flag was planted in their hearts.

So, what happens when we lay Jesus' template on His generation over our own? Are we qualified to do that? What questions would we ask to understand this generation? Just taking this text we might ask the following questions:

1. To what power and authority do we ascribe Jesus' work today?
2. Do we even recognize Jesus at work today?
3. Does this generation recognize the Kingdom rule of God on their lives?
4. Has Jesus gained entrance into most houses or hearts so as to bind the strong man?
5. Are most 'with' Jesus or are most 'scattering'?
6. What fruit do we see in the land to indicate whether our tree is good or evil?
7. What do we treasure in our generation?
8. What types of words are we speaking today?
9. Do we want or need more evidence than we have been given for Jesus authenticity?
10. More specifically, does the resurrection of Jesus impress and draw people to Jesus?
11. What is the state of our 'house' or our 'heart'? Is it full of demons? Unfilled with Good?
12. Have we returned to things we previously were freed from?

Well, those are twelve questions that are taken out of this text that we've just studied and I think they would be appropriate to at least ask the question of our generation to see what we come up with.

Jesus is losing influence in our land and generation, not gaining. His authority is challenged by government, by education, and within our families, thus we do not see Jesus at work as conquering King. His work is overshadowed by "other kingdoms" who we think may save us. Addictions and other controls reign within our hearts today. Lives are controlled by many strong men. Even those professing "Jesus is Lord" *scatter* His work through *division* and apathy. We do not often value what Jesus values. Our speech betrays us as Peter's did. Our words are careless and unemployed words; the learners seem to want "more evidence". They want new finds, novel sources instead of 'what we have'. Resurrection does not dominate American thinking even in many churches. We go back and are enslaved by what we once were freed from. So I'd simply say that if you look at comparing our generation with Jesus' generation, there are many similarities and there are things we need to consider very carefully if we are going to have a different outcome. If we're going to be more like Nineveh, if we're going to be more like the Queen of the South, we're going to have to give better attention to the things of the Spirit; the things of God.

Thank you for joining us today. You may go to our site at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/> to find all kinds of things there that will help you in your spiritual life. If we can be of any help to you, there are phone numbers there; there is also a way to E-mail us so we would love to respond to you. Again, thank you for joining us and have a great and blessed day.