

Matthew 12:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Analysis

When the unclean spirit is gone out (τὸ ἀκάθαρτον πνεῦμα ἐξέλθῃ, to akatharton pneuma exelthē)—Jesus transitions from condemning unbelief to warning against mere reformation without regeneration. The akatharton pneuma ('unclean spirit') represents demonic possession, but the parable applies to any spiritual cleansing without filling by God's Spirit.

Walketh through dry places (διέρχεται δι' ἀνύδρων τόπων, dierchetai di' anydrōn topōn)—Ancient belief held that demons inhabited waterless, desolate regions (cf. Isaiah 13:21; 34:14). The spirit seeks anapausis (ἀνάπαυσις, 'rest') but finds none—demons are restless until they possess and destroy.

Historical Context

Spoken in the context of accusations that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub. The parable warns that external reform (religious activity, moral improvement) without Spirit-regeneration leaves one vulnerable to worse demonic oppression.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Have you experienced moral reformation without true regeneration—a 'swept house' but still empty of God's presence?
2. What does this passage reveal about the danger of stopping at removing sin rather than filling your life with Christ?

Interlinear Text

Ὅταν	δὲ	τὸ	ἀκάθαρτον	πνεῦμα	ἐξέλθῃ	ἀπὸ	τοῦ
When	G1161	G3588	the unclean	spirit	is gone	out of	G3588
G3752			G169	G4151	G1831	G575	
ἀνθρώπου	διέρχεται	δι'	ἀνύδρων	τόπων	ζητοῦν		
a man	he walketh	through	dry	places	seeking		
G444	G1330	G1223	G504	G5117	G2212		
ἀνάπαυσιν	καὶ	οὐχ	εὕρισκει				
rest	and	none	findeth				
G372	G2532	G3756	G2147				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 41:18 (Parallel theme): I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

Job 1:7 (Kingdom): And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Job 2:2 (Kingdom): And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Matthew 8:29 (Parallel theme): And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Acts 8:13 (Parallel theme): Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

1 Peter 5:8 (Kingdom): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

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