REFORMATION IS NOT ENOUGH
(Matt. 12:45)

In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus gave a parable or an analogy that depicted the condition of Israel. He described it as when a demon leaves a person and the person consequently sees REFORM in the life without regeneration.

The parable continues…

Matthew 12:45 (NKJV)
45 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 also be with this wicked generation."

Verse 45 indicates that there are degrees of wickedness among the demons. Some are more wicked than others. The worst of the worst, after the flood, were confined to chains of darkness in a special holding place called Tartarus to await final judgment (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4).

But in this parable the demon finding his former house (the body of this man) reformed but unoccupied, then takes with him seven other more wicked spirits and together they all possess the man making his last state worse than the first.

And then Jesus made this application: "***So shall it also be with this wicked generation.***" Yes, Judaism under the leadership of the Pharisees which emerged out of the Babylonian Captivity had forsaken formalized idolatry. In that sense the house of Israel was swept and clean.

> "But those man-made standards, purportedly based on God's Word, had led them further and further from God. They were so self-sufficient and self-righteous that when God Himself came among them in human form they rejected, vilified, and finally crucified Him." **–** ***John MacArthur***

Demonic activity and idolatry are very closely linked throughout the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, Paul explains that idols within themselves are NOTHING. However, demons associated with idolatry are very real (cf. 1 Cor. 10:19-20).

Even though Israel, ever since the time of the Babylonian Captivity, has never fallen back into formalized idolatry, yet the very worst form of IDOLATRY is yet to come for them.

And that is when the apostate nation of Israel will worship the Antichrist. At some point Israel will look to the Antichrist as their Savior and enter into a 7-year covenant with him, as so stated in Daniel 9:27. This is elsewhere stated to be "***a covenant with death***" (cf. Isa. 28:15, 18). This will be the worst time in Israel's history, called in Jeremiah 30:7 "***the time of Jacob's trouble***" (cf. Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21).

And yet in that context God will purge apostasy from the nation, and 1/3 of the Jews will come to repentance and saving faith in Jesus as their Messiah, as seen in Zechariah 13:8-9.

> **Jeremiah 30:7 (NKJV)**
> **7** Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is **the time of Jacob's trouble**, **But he shall be saved out of it**.

What we have in Matthew 12:43-45 is a summary of Israel's history in parabolic form regarding her problem with idolatry! They had a demonic problem with idolatry in the OT. Then they were broken of this in the Babylonian Captivity, which left their house swept and clean but at the same time empty. The Messiah came seeking to fill their house, but they refused Him. And consequently, the worst form of demonic idolatry is yet to come for the nation of Israel, which will be realized under Antichrist.

> "Whether in the broad range of history or in an individual life, the same principle applies: outer reformation without inner transformation brings susceptibility to even worse evil than that from which one turned away. – ***John MacArthur***

What Israel failed to realize is that religious reformation is not enough. We need God to fill our lives. We need relationship with God and not merely religious or moral reformation. This is what Jesus goes on to show!

> "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee." - Augustine

God has made us for Himself, and to merely apply self-reformation is not sufficient. We need a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead of rules being our Lord, we need the Lord Himself to be our Lord. Ultimately, it's not about Reformation but rather about Relationship. This is the whole issue. It's all about a life-changing relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“It is not enough to clean house; we must also invite in the right tenant. The Pharisees were proud of their “clean houses,” but their hearts were empty! Mere religion, or reformation, will not save. There must be regeneration, the receiving of Christ into the heart (see Rev. 3:20).” ***– Warren Wiersbe***