

The house was swept and decorated”—What does it mean?
(Luke 11:26)

Question: Jesus said that when an evil spirit leaves a person and later returns, finding the house swept and decorated, it may bring seven other spirits worse than itself. What does it mean for the house to be “swept and decorated”? Do demons prefer clean places?

Answer: Let’s start by reading the relevant verses to understand the full context:

Luke 11:24-26

When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it passes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds it swept and decorated. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.

To better understand the meaning of “swept and decorated,” we must first recognize what the “house” refers to in a spiritual sense.

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The Body as a Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Scriptures make it clear that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. This concept is foundational to understanding what it means to be spiritually “swept and decorated.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

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The imagery of the body being a “temple” conveys the idea that our bodies are designed to house the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is not present, the body can be filled with other influences, specifically demonic forces. The fact that our bodies are temples indicates that they are to be kept pure, set apart for God’s glory, and inhabited by His Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit does not dwell within us, there is a spiritual vacuum that demons are eager to occupy. This is why the “house” Jesus refers to in Luke 11:24-26 is our physical body, which, without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, becomes a target for demonic spirits.

The Meaning of “Swept and Decorated”

When Jesus speaks of the house being “swept and decorated,” He is illustrating the state of a person’s spiritual life after deliverance or an attempt to purify oneself. To be “swept” suggests a cleaning process, the removal of evil or impure influences from one’s life. However, simply cleaning or purging the house (body) is not enough; it must be “decorated” with the right things—namely, the Holy Spirit and holiness.

Matthew 12:43-45

When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but it finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.

In this passage, Jesus highlights that just cleaning the house (one’s life) without filling it with the right spirit leads to greater danger. The house (body) must not remain empty, or it becomes a place of greater demonic activity.

In theological terms, the “sweeping” represents an attempt at self-purification or an effort to rid oneself of sin or demonic influence. But if the house is not filled with the presence of God, the effort is incomplete, and the demons will return, bringing with them even more powerful forces.

The Role of Adornment: What Does It Mean to “Decorate” the House?

To understand what it means to “decorate” the house, we can turn to other parts of the Bible that talk about how we should adorn ourselves spiritually. The Bible offers guidance on the appropriate kind of “decorations” for God’s temple.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.

This passage highlights that God values inner beauty over outward adornment. External adornment—like jewelry, elaborate hairstyles, or extravagant clothing—can be seen as a form of “decoration” that distracts from the inner spiritual reality. While the world values these external decorations, the Bible teaches

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that true beauty lies in a heart that is gentle, peaceful, and humble.

In the context of Luke 11:25-26, “decorating” one’s house spiritually refers to how a person fills their life after an initial cleansing. If one merely engages in external behavior modification—such as adopting a certain appearance or trying to live morally without inward transformation—the house (body) will remain vulnerable. The demonic forces are drawn to superficial “decorations” because they are signs of vanity and pride, not the humility and purity that God desires.

Demonic Decorations: What Are They?

When we focus on external appearance—adornments like excessive jewelry, revealing clothing, or other worldly signs of vanity—these can be considered “demonic decorations” because they reflect the values of a fallen world, rooted in pride, self-glorification, and materialism. Demons are attracted to these things because they are expressions of rebellion against God’s ways, and they find these empty pursuits conducive to their influence.

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1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

These verses emphasize the need to reject worldly values and conform to God's will. When our adornment is based on worldly standards, we are spiritually vulnerable, allowing demonic spirits to invade and corrupt us.

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True Adornment: A Heart Transformed by God

In contrast, the Bible emphasizes that true adornment is not external but internal. It's the transformation of the heart through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 3:12-14

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

These virtues—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and love—are the true adornments that make our lives pleasing to God. These virtues reflect the character of Christ, and when our lives are filled with them, we create a spiritual environment that repels demonic forces and welcomes the Holy Spirit.

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Conclusion: Filling the House with God’s Spirit

In summary, the “sweeping” of the house represents an effort to rid oneself of sin or demonic influence, while the “decorating” of the house refers to how we fill our lives afterward. If we leave our lives empty—focused only on external appearances and worldly pursuits—our lives remain open to demonic influence. Instead, we must “decorate” our lives with the presence of the Holy Spirit, which fills us with Christ-like virtues, peace, and holiness. Only then can our lives be true temples of God, protected from the return of evil spirits.

Ephesians 5:18-20

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By being filled with the Holy Spirit, we ensure that our spiritual

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house remains protected, clean, and truly decorated according to
God’s will.

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