

## The Myth of Neutrality (Luke 11:14-28)

### 1. A Divided Crowd (v.14-16)

*Jesus performs a miracle by healing a man who was muted by a demon (v.14)*

- The Greek wording confuses the demon and the man, i.e., the demon is called dumb because it made the man dumb. The elliptical grammar is theologically perceptive because the demon hates that which is different than itself.
- While the crowds marveled, marveling is not necessarily symptomatic of belief. Instead, the crowds can be divided into two categories: (A) antagonists and (B) skeptics:

#### A. The Antagonist: *They accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons (v.15)*

- Beelzebul had become a Hebrew alternative name for Satan. In Ugaritic texts, Beelzebul means "Baal, the prince." The Greek reads Beelzeboul. The word "zebul" occurs five times in the OT (1 Kgs. 8:13; 2 Chron. 6:2; Isa. 63:15; Hab. 3:11; Ps. 49:14). In the OT, the name is rendered Baal-zebul, which was the god of Ekron (Canaanite) and can be interpreted as the "lord of the flies" or the "lord of the dunghill" (2 Kgs. 1:2, 3, 6, 16). The OT alludes to an exalted dwelling place such as a temple. It means "Baal's abode or dynasty." Jesus' rhetorical question equates Satan with Beelzebul.

The antagonist is a calculated blasphemer and slanderer, accusing God and His people of thinking or behaving in a way that is inconsistent with reality.

#### B. The Skeptic: *"Others tested him and demanded a sign from heaven" (v.16)*

- While they marveled, they demanded more "signs." They wanted a miracle or sign, like manna from heaven (Ex. 16:4; Jn. 6:30-31) or the floating of an axe head (2 Kgs. 6:1-7). Jesus has confirmed His status as a prophet (Deut. 13:1-2).
- The skeptic is prejudiced against reasonable faith and will always demand more 'proof.' He is never satisfied, as his worldview is bent toward doubt.

The antagonists and skeptics do not want to come "face to face" with their unbelief, sin, and future judgment. It is birthed not only from intellectual laziness but also from spiritual blindness.

### 2. A Divided Kingdom (v.17-20)

- Jesus will not allow the crowd's foolishness and absurdity to continue. He navigates the proverbial principle to "rebuke the fool, lest he be wise in his own eyes" (Prov. 26:5).
- Jesus knows their thoughts (v.17) and provides two illustrations of the absurdity of their claims: any kingdom that is divided against itself will be "laid waste."
  - *Laid waste*: to collapse, devastate, or ruin. How can a kingdom divided against itself stand? It cannot.
  - Jesus has already commented that He "saw Satan fall like lightning" (10:18).

*"If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out" (v.19)? Who are the sons? (A) other Jewish exorcists. (B) disciples of Jesus who were not part of the twelve (9:49-50). (C) Jesus' twelve disciples.*

Do the crowds/Scribes/Pharisees (Matt. 12:24; Mk. 3:22) accuse others of performing exorcisms in the power of Satan, or just Jesus? They are prejudiced against Jesus.

*Jesus mentions the finger of God (v.20):*

- Refers the reader to the OT account of Moses delivering Israel from Egypt through various plagues (Ex. 8:19). Pharaoh's magicians used this expression to describe one of the deadly plagues in Egypt.
- Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt. Jesus' miracles are the deliverance from bondage to Satan. It is deliverance from the kingdom of Satan.

### 3. A Divided House (v.21-26)

- Satan cannot recapture or sever the believer's eternal life (Jn. 8:44; 10:28-29; 17:6-26; Rom. 8:39). While the believer cannot be demon-possessed, he can be demon-oppressed. Satan is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. He has 6,000 years of perfecting his craft.

This is a mysterious passage. Jesus lifts the veil on the spiritual realities of the unseen world. Jesus' description is a parable-illustration. He continues with His theme of "kingdom" and uses two illustrations: (A) a "palace (castle)" with armor and spoils and (B) a "house."

#### A. *The strong man and his castle/guards/armor/spoil (v. 21-22)*

- Satan is referred to as a "strong man" (v.21) with spoil. Only one stronger than this "strong man" can defeat him. Satan is described as having "armed guards" (plural), whereas Jesus is spoken of in the singular (He).
- The spoil refers to those whom he has taken captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26). Satan is the ruler of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), who works in the hearts of unbelievers that follow him as the prince and power of the air (Eph. 2:1-2). He has power over the whole world (1 Jn. 5:19).
- The redemption that is procured through the person and work of Christ is not done through peace but war (Acts 26:18; Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Jn. 3:8).

The incarnation is nothing short of an assault against the fully armed strong man, a carefully planned offensive to subdue a hostile power and return man to God's intended purpose and image of the Creator (1 Jn. 3:8). Only Jesus can bind the strong man.

- Jesus and Satan are not two sides of the same coin. They are irrevocably and eternally incompatible. Jesus gathers (Mk. 14:28; Jn. 10:11), but Satan scatters (Mk. 14:27; Jn. 10:12).

#### B. *The house that has been "swept clean" (v. 24-26)*

- Jesus describes a person from whom the demon has left. We are not informed how or why it left; it departed from the man and sought rest in "waterless" places. This would be an arid or desert/desolate location. The desert/wilderness is a proverbial place of the demons, as the desert was often thought to be inhabited by demons (8:29; Lev. 16:10; Isa. 34:13-14).
- The demon has left the "house" (heart) of the person, only to return with seven others (symbolic of completion).
- The house being "swept" indicates that there is a "vacuum" (space) in the house. This is a euphemism for the heart. If the heart is spiritually "vacant," it allows the demons to return with greater force and intensity.
- This describes someone who attempts to self-renoate, self-improve, and "moralize" their life without the Holy Spirit's regeneration and power/presence.
- Satan and his host prefer apostates since their latter condition will be worse than the former (2 Pet. 2:20-21). Moral reformation without spiritual regeneration will lead to demonic domination.

### 4. An Inviting Woman (v.27-28)

- As opposed to the crowds, Pharisees and Scribes who were skeptical, a woman cries out a eulogy to Jesus, affirming the prophecy of the Magnificat (1:28, 42, 48). It is intended to pay tribute to those who are born from worthy women.
- True blessedness is not in family blood (8:15) but in those who obey (8:21). While the woman was correct in her statement, Jesus completed the sentence: "Those who hear the word of God and keep it" (v.28).
- The kingdom of God is not in word and power of speech. It is the power of Spirit-filled, Spirit-enabled living that self-help and self-reformation cannot procure.

God hates lukewarmness, apathy, spectators, and non-commitment. There is no neutrality concerning the person and work of Jesus: you are either of His kingdom or Satan's. Sin destroys, but Jesus saves. Satan cripples, but Jesus liberates. Neutrality is a myth (v.23).