

Jesus Heals a Possessed Man & Conflict Arises Luke 11:14-36

By the third year of Jesus' ministry, we have found many things that recur: some teachings, similar healings, recurring questions, old arguments, and consistent conflicts, to name a few. In this incident of Jesus, there are several of these types of repetitions, underscoring the continuation of the people's hard hearts toward Jesus and His message. We find the same scenario elsewhere in the Gospels – Jesus casting out a demon, followed by the accusation that He is doing it by the power of the Devil. But also, we have heard the desire for a “sign from heaven.” Though these occur at different times and in different places, with different crowds, their reactions against Jesus are the same. But Jesus' arguments were the same.

Matthew 9:32-34 - Galilee (9:1) – healing of a possessed man – power of the Devil – no answer from Jesus

Matthew 12:22-50/Mark 3:22-35 – Galilee – healing of a possessed man – power of the Devil; desired a sign from heaven– Jesus gives many of the same arguments, including who He deemed as blessed

Matthew 16:1-4/Mark 8:11-12 – Galilee – desired a sign from heaven – Jesus gives the argument concerning Jonah

I. Jesus' Healing & Two Conflicts Arise

“And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. ¹⁵ But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. ¹⁶ And others, tempting (Lit. - testing; pushing; demand of) him, sought of him a sign from heaven.” Luke 11:14-16

The healing and the crowd's reaction: We read here that after Jesus cast out the demon and the people, “multitudes wondered.” Other translations have “marveled,” “awed,” “amazed,” “astounded,” “admired,” “were excited and enthusiastic,” “they were completely surprised.” This struck me as strange, for Jesus had been performing amazing healings and casting out demons for at least three years. But then I remembered, this is in Judea, where He had not been for over 18 months. Many of these people had not seen Him before! The language here is very strong; there is a sense that the people were ready to accept Jesus as their Messiah. But whenever the people were close to believing in and following Jesus as the Christ, there was always strong opposition from the vocal unbelievers! Instead of rejoicing that God had sent the Redeemer, they were trying to discredit Jesus' work and character!

I want you to see something. In the other two similar events found in Matthew 9 & 12, it is the Religious Leaders who verbally opposed Jesus and defamed His person. But here we read simply, “some of them.” It seems that the accusation and testing here is coming from people within the crowd who had observed the healing and not necessarily Religious Leaders.

1. “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils” – Beelzebub is a Jewish symbol of the Devil/Satan at the time of Christ. It originated from the Philistine deity Baal. In the past, the Pharisees and Scribes couldn't deny the casting out of the demons as a miracle, as supernatural, so they had to discredit it, and this accusation couldn't be worse. Here, we see it was picked up by the people. As a matter of fact, early church history records that, decades after the accession of Jesus, this was still one of the main arguments used against His person and power!

But within the crowd, we hear another comment, this time a demand! One we have heard before, at another time and place. (Matthew 16:1-4/Mark 8:11-12) Keep in mind this demand doesn't seem to be coming from

Religious Leaders, but from common folks, who have taken on the thinking of their “great ones,” the Pharisees and Scribes.

2. “And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven” – Notice what they wanted here, “a sign from heaven.” Again, this certainly does raise the bar on solely seeking a “sign” from Jesus – like a casting out of demons, healing the blind, or the gravely ill! Things, of course, Jesus was doing all the time! **Jews believed that only a miracle or sign in the cosmos could be done by God.** Some in the crowd wanted greater proof of His power than just the casting out of a demon! How ridiculous! They wanted a rearrangement of the constellations, a movement of the moon, a darkening of the sun. We do find these in the Old Testament:

- 1) Noah’s rainbow – Gen. 9:12-17
- 2) Joshua’s sun standing still – Josh. 10:12-14
- 3) Elijah’s fire from heaven – 1 Kings 18
- 4) Isaiah’s sun turned back – Is. 13:10
- 5) Samuel’s thunder and rain – 1 Sam. 12:17-18

This was the religious culture of the Jews. They loved their signs; faith was never enough! **I Cor. 1:21-24** Again, let’s remember the reaction of the disciples when Jesus calmed the sea (**Matt. 8:27 - “What manner of man is this?”**), and walked on the water (**Matt. 14:33 - “Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”**)! These were very strong signs to them. And the request found in this incident, “a sign from heaven,” would be very similar to what Jesus had displayed to His disciples in these events.

II. Jesus’ Three Arguments against Conflict #1 – Jesus’ Power is that of Satan’s

“But he, knowing their thoughts (Jesus’ diety seen again), said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. ¹⁸If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. ¹⁹And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons (Lit. - disciples, followers) cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. ²⁰But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. ²¹When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: ²²But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. ²³He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” Luke 11:17-23

1. “every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation” v. 17-18 – Jesus will refute this ridiculous accusation. There was no logic to their theory. Here, Jesus uses the truth that a country in the midst of a civil war or a power struggle among authorities brings only unrest, confusion, and instability. Even the very land can quickly become deserted, turn into a wilderness, and be laid waste as the citizens escape the dangers. No interest will stand when it’s at war within itself. This is also true of struggles within a family, church, business, or a nation. Jesus was obviously stronger than Satan, and Satan would never fight against himself.

2. “by whom do your sons cast them out” v. 19 – Again, Jesus is reusing this argument against their accusation. With this, we are getting a glimpse into a phenomenon most of us are not acquainted with – exorcism! There seems to have been the power of casting out demons given to men at the time of Christ. Bible teachers are not sure whether this was real. In Acts 19, it was not. But here, Jesus reminds them that when their own followers cast out demons, they attributed this power to God, yet in His case, they would not grant the same privilege! I love the line in verse 19, “they shall be your judges.” The crowd could not have it both ways!

3. “I with the finger of God cast out devils” v. 20-22 Jesus is saying anyone who would cast out demons would need to have more power than the demons. “the finger of God” is a Jewish figure of speech. I just love this picture of Jesus’ power. We’ve all noticed the big bicep muscles of football players or weightlifters. The strength one can build up by consistent training is pretty amazing! Within the Old Testament, God’s great power is pictured by His arm, both His strength and saving power. (Deut. 4:34; Psalm 89:10; Is. 52:10) Everyone listening that day to Jesus would have known that metaphor, but notice what Jesus said, “But if I with the finger of God cast out devils.” He didn’t need the full power of the strong arm of God to dismiss a demon from a man, just like a flick of His authoritative finger! Like we might push a bug off a table. No strength needed! No effort made. But it was obvious to Jesus that removing this demon was a simple, easy task. Then Jesus finishes this argument with an amazing statement, “no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” Jesus says, “Here’s your proof, no doubt here, my strength over this demon is all you need to realize that the kingdom of God is come!” Jesus’ power over demon possession was a great proof of who and why He came – to destroy the works of the Devil! Later, the disciple John will write this in 1 John 3:8, “He that committeth sin is of the evil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

Parable of the strong man: In verses 21-22, we see a short parable that is very similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 12. It is about the continual conflict between God and the Devil! Satan is the strong man who guards his possessions closely and values his position and power. But he actually has a stronger foe, and that would be Jesus, the One who can remove his armor, take from him his holdings, and completely overcome him! That day, when Jesus cast out that dumb demon from the man, He was plundering Satan’s possession, but in the future, there is a day coming when the Devil will be cast away forever, and that should thrill our souls!

Rev. 20:10

Conclusion: “He that is not with me is against me” v.23 – Here is Jesus’ challenge! He is asking the crowd, “Which will you choose: being against me, or gathering with me?” Two metaphors are used here: fighting together, like in an army, and laborers working together in farm fields. “Are you on my side? Or are you going to try and sabotage my crops?” In the conflict with Satan, **one cannot be neutral**. Either you will be with Christ or under the control of Satan. Many seemed to have already decided to scatter lies and hate about Jesus, how the people needed to decide for Christ, just like people need to choose Him today!

III. Jesus Illustrates Israel’s Spiritual Condition

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. ²⁵And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished (Lit. put in order). ²⁶Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” **Luke 11:24-26** Jesus is comparing the nation of Israel to a person who was demon-possessed! The Jews had left behind their worship of Baal, sacrificing their children to Moloch, and other terrible deeds of idol worship. They had been brought back to the worship of God and the re-establishment of temple worship by great men like Ezra and Nehemiah. Their “house” had been cleaned up! But Israel’s commitment to God didn’t last.

1. Israel had 400 years of going their own way without a message from God. In their enthusiasm to obey the law to the letter, over 600 “traditions of the elders” were written to “help” the people follow the commandments of God. But these became unnecessary burdens that took the people’s eyes off God and onto performing tasks!

2. John the Baptist – The truth of Deut. 6:4-5 was not a fiber of most Jews by the time John the Baptist was born. “Here, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” John was the first prophet after the long 400-year silence. Israel had not placed God at the center of their worship; they were deceived concerning their blindness and their continual idol worship! They were serving a system and religion that only looked like the worship of God! So, John called them back to God; he preached, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And one day, when he saw Jesus coming to him, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.”

3. Jesus the Christ – Jesus was their Messiah. He came as prophesied in the Old Testament and presented Himself to them through miraculous signs and preaching. In this incident, we see them denying His power and rejecting His person! “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” John 1:11

4. Rejection and Judgment – By this parable, Jesus was pointing out their condition that day, but there was no turning to Him, and certainly little repentance.

They had been spiritually blind **in idolatry** against God →

After the captivity in Babylon, **they repented and turned to God** →

Sought a Form of God-following through **Pharisaic rules and laws** →

Now, so blind against the truths of God, they **rejected their very own Messiah!**

And since then, as we study the history of the Jewish people, we know how bad it has been for them. Their last state has been worse than ever, and they have continued to reject God, continue in their religion, and have continued to suffer for it.

But God will be faithful to His promises. They are still His chosen people, and He still has promises to fulfill. It is wonderful to remember that individual Jews are being saved today just as some recognized Christ as their Messiah during His lifetime on earth. But one day the whole nation will again worship Him in spirit and in truth! Rom. 11:25-27

IV. Odd Interruption

“And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. ²⁸But he said, Yea _____, blessed are they that _____ the word of God, and _____ it.” Luke 11:27-28

“Spiritual knowledge leading to spiritual kinship was the most blessed wish for them all.” JW Shepard

V. Jesus’ Three Arguments against Conflict #2 – Desire for a Sign

“And when the people were gathered _____ together, he began to say, This is an _____ generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of _____ the prophet. ³⁰For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. ³¹The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of _____; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a _____ than Jonah is here.” Luke 11:29-32

1. The Sign of Jonah and Nineveh –

2. The Sign of Solomon and the Queen of the South –

3. The Greater Sign is here → Jesus Christ –

VI. Jesus’ Call to the Nation

“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the _____. ³⁴The light of the body is the _____: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. ³⁵Take heed (Lit. - _____) therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. ³⁶If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” Luke 11:33-36

“the light” –

“light of the body is the eye”

“eye is single” –

“eye is evil” –

“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” –

Believers' Application:

1. Jesus said, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." Luke 11:19 The arm, hand, and fingers of God are repeated word pictures in Scripture.

"finger of God" represents His power & authority

"hand of God" – represents His creative & sustaining work

"arm of God" – represents His judgment & salvation

"finger of God" – Is seen four times in Scripture, showing God's power and authority. Twice, it refers to His writing of the Ten Commandments. (**Ex. 31:18; Deut. 9:10**) Here we see God's authority and power over the affairs of man!

"hand of God" – Do you understand that God made you with His hands? **Ps. 119:73; Job 10:8** The "hand of God" represents His creative work. Isaiah 64:8 gives us this picture too, "...O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." But also, He sustains us in His hand. Jesus said, of those that follow Him, "...My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

But it is the **"arm of God"** that shows His great ability to judge and save! One of the great demonstrations of God's powerful arm was the saving of His people, Israel, out of Egypt. Several times, we see this truth given in the Old Testament. **Deut. 5:15; Ps. 136:11-14** We see the power of God to save in Isaiah 52:10, "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Even Paul used this word picture when preaching about God's power against the Egyptians, "The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it." Acts 13:17.

These verses all show the power of God to save! And that is the same power found in the Gospel of Christ! When God saves us, His power is seen! He redeems us from darkness to light, from eternal damnation to an eternal home in heaven with Him! All done by His power by the work of Jesus! **Roman 1:16** Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the **gospel of Christ**: for it is the **power of God** unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." **1 Cor. 1:18, 24** "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God....But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Has your life been affected by the power of God unto salvation? Have you put your trust in Jesus' work for you on the cross? But then, have you sought His power to work in you? Let's finish by reminding ourselves of His transforming power brought to us by our salvation and the knowledge of God and our wonderful Lord Jesus! 2 Peter 1:1-4