

11:14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed.

In Luke 11:14 Jesus cast a demon out of a mute man, who according to Matthew 12:22–23 was also blind. The man could instantly speak and see. The demon is characterized by the effects it has on the man (Danker, 231); Luke says, “it was a mute.”

In the context of Matthew, the crowds were trying to determine if Jesus was the son of David, a title that had messianic significance. In other words, they were pondering if Jesus was the Christ. Although Luke doesn't mention this, Luke 7:22 (Isa. 53:6) makes it clear that Jesus' miracles were to be viewed as signs of Jesus' identity.

11:15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."

The crowd was amazed by the miracle, but they were unsure about how to explain it. There were only two options: either the power had come from God or from Satan. The OT warned about testing those who come with signs (Deut. 13:1-3 and also Jesus' warning about false signs in Matt. 24:24), so the reaction is not surprising.

It was useless to deny the fact of the miracle and they were unwilling to call Jesus the Christ, so they attempted to discredit the miracle by saying it was produced by Beelzebul, or Satan himself; this in itself was a most absurd explanation.

The origin of the term “Beelzebul” is uncertain, but it most likely goes back to the Canaanite deity, Baal (Morris, 216). “Beel-” is equivalent to “Baal,” or “Lord” and “-z^ebul” can be traced to the word “house,” “high place,” or “temple” (Marshall, 473). Literally, therefore, the name would mean “lord of the house,” (Marshall, 473) or “the exalted one” (Bock). The Jews “took the name of the heathen god and understood it in terms of the similar sounding Hebrew word, ‘lord of dung’” (Morris, 216). It was then applied to demons or the prince of demons (Satan). Jesus understood it to be a reference to Satan (11:18).

To call the power of God the power of “the lord of dung” and accuse the holy Son of God of being in league with Satan are the most blasphemous charges that could be leveled against Him.

There is some irony in that the crowd had accused Jesus of being in league with Satan and yet they were the ones doing Satan's work (Lk. 4) by “testing” the Messiah.

11:16 Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven.

Others wanted a sign. That is, they wanted some authenticating proof of Jesus' identity.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22 Paul said, “Jews ask for signs,” that is, they demanded that God provide some sort of supernatural evidence in order for them to believe. They felt if something happened that would dazzle their minds, they would know that it was true (Matt. 11:38-39; 12:39-40; Mk. 8:11; Lk. 11:16; 16:31; Jn. 6:30; Acts 17:18, 21, 32). Part of this is based on Jewish messianic expectations of a Deliverer

who would vindicate who He was by the signs that accompanied Him. However, the belief that God “must present His credentials in the form of visible and identifiable acts . . . [is] fundamentally skeptical and essentially egotistical” (Barrett, 1 Corinthians, 54).

Under other circumstances it may not be that odd to demand a sign, especially from someone whom people were considering might be the Messiah. Moses had used miraculous signs as proof of his divine mission; Elijah had called fire from heaven; Gideon had received a sign in Judges 6:36–40, and heavenly bodies stood still for Joshua in Joshua 10:12–13. In Acts 2:22, Peter pointed out that Jesus was a man who was attested by God “with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him” in their midst. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:12, spoke of the signs of a true apostle as signs and wonders and miracles. “So the desire for a sign is not itself self–evidently wrong” (France, NIGTC, Mark, 312). Miracles attested to Jesus’ identity and the authenticity of God’s messengers. However, in the historical context of Luke, demanding a sign was absurd. Jesus had already performed a vast multitude of miracles, displaying power in every realm, over nature, disease, death, and the spiritual world. More evidence was not necessary. Jesus’ refusal to give a sign in 11:29 and following was most likely due to the fact that the Pharisees had already rejected the clear evidence that was available in Jesus’ teaching in ministry.

The request for a sign was disingenuous; Luke says they were testing Jesus. But, as in Luke 5:22, 6:8, and 7:39–47, Jesus knew the thoughts of His audience, prompting His reply in verse 17ff.

11:17 But He knew their thoughts and said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls."

Jesus responded by saying, “a house divided against itself cannot stand.” (Mark 3:24–25 lists three illustrations that all make the same point - a divided kingdom, a divided house, and a divided city).

The question behind Jesus’ statement is, would Satan act in such a way that he would defeat his own purposes? The illustration assumes that people understood that Satan has a kingdom and that he has a quest to destroy humanity. For Satan to cast out a demon and restore someone’s sight and speech would be counterproductive to his purposes.

11:18 "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul."

11:19 "And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges."

11:20 "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

In verses 18 to 20 Jesus shows how illogical it is to suggest that He cast the demon out by the power of Satan. He uses three conditional sentences to make his point.

First, how can Satan have a standing kingdom if he is working against himself? A kingdom that wars against itself is doomed to fall. It makes no sense to conclude that Satan would be encouraging demonic activity and be fighting against them at the same time.

The second question is in verse 19. On what basis can one say, “Jesus casts out demons by the power of Satan, but other Jews do it by the power of God?” It is inconsistent to say Jesus’ exorcisms are done with satanic power yet not label others who do the same thing as “servants of Beelzebul.” If Jesus’ critics are not willing to ascribe other exorcists’ work to Satan, they cannot so label Jesus’ (Talbert, 143). The Jewish exorcists would stand as judges of the crowd; they would bear testimony against those in the crowd who had rejected this work of God.

The third conditional sentence is in verse 20. This is intended to lead people to understand what Jesus’ miracle meant. If Jesus was casting out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come, for it shows that the stronger one has overcome Satan (verses 21-22).

The question is that when Jesus said, “the kingdom of God has come upon you” did He mean that the kingdom of God “was close” or that it “had arrived”?

I believe Bock’s conclusions are correct and will quote him at length:

. . . the concept of God's physical rule in a great age of fulfilment was expected both in the OT and in Judaism. The expectation took two forms: the prophetic hope that God would bring this promised age to pass on earth through sociopolitical rule, and the apocalyptic hope that He would usher it in with heavenly signs (1080).

Bock then goes on to explain the different views of the passage, but concludes that the most significant key in understanding what Jesus meant is found in the phrase, “the kingdom of God has come upon you.” He says:

Above all considerations, however, stands the prepositional reference to “upon you” (ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς), which because of its personal object cannot look at approach, but must refer to arrival. The point is that Jesus’ activity gives evidence of the arrival of God's kingdom. This arrival is vividly evident in His power, which His followers also exhibit. Jesus’ work and demonstration of saving authority in their midst must be dealt with. It calls for decision . . .

If the kingdom has come in an initial but not consummative form, what does the current form involve? The portrait of Luke-Acts provides a good answer. Jesus is perceived as ruling over God's many salvation benefits. He has authority to distribute them to anyone who responds to His message (Lk. 3:15–17; Acts 2:16–39). In addition, He provides the Spirit as a sign of the arrival of the promised age and as a source of guidance over those He rules (Lk. 24: 44-49; Acts 2). The emphasis of the kingdom picture in the present phase is not on realm, but rule.

Nonetheless, a realm is envisioned. Jesus’ realm is the world as it is manifested in his scattered followers and contained in His total authority over salvific blessing, and authority that is present over everyone. The presence of His rule in believers anticipates His coming to earth to rule physically, when He will exercise dominion and judgment over the earth. This theme of reign and authority is expressed in various ways in Luke – Acts. (1) Acts associates the concept of Jesus’ universal lordship and rule with the fulfilment of Davidic promise (Acts 2:30–39; 13:32–

39; see also Luke 1:68-79). (2) Acts 3:19–24 makes clear that the program is not yet consummated or completed but will come to pass as the OT prophets taught. (3) Acts 10:42–43 and 17:31 show Jesus' authoritative role over salvation and His ultimate function as judge. (4) The parables of Jesus speak of the Son's going away soon to receive a kingdom and so look at His present authority.

The rule expressed in Luke 11 is the first phase of this kingdom program, what we might call the "invisible kingdom." The kingdom in Acts is expressed in the ministry of the Spirit during the time of Jesus' physical absence (thus the term *invisible*) from the earth. It is this rule that Jesus says is arriving now and that is pictured in His work of exorcism. The result of His presence is powerfully evident in the transformed people over whom He rules in the church, even though He is not physically visible. The first phase of His rule is really put in place with the resurrection-ascension and the distribution of salvation's benefits (Acts 2:30–39), the roots of which are in the promise of the new covenant (Lk. 22:19–28; 24:49; Acts 1:7–8). From that time on, Jesus rules from God's right hand. He is not present on earth for all to see, but rules through the benefits He bestows on those who come to Him, especially forgiveness of sins, the Spirit, and the life He brings. The Spirit reflects God's presence in people, as well as God's work and power and His promise. Humans are now able to live as God would desire because they respond to His Spirit, so that His rule becomes evident in their lives. This group of disciples, which becomes the church, is not all there is to the kingdom nor is it all there is to God's plan and promise, but it is a microcosm of what the kingdom will be when OT promises are completely fulfilled at Jesus' return. The Spirit is the down payment of the redemption to come (Eph. 1:13–14).

At His return, Jesus' rule will be made visible by His physical presence on earth during the millennium and beyond. This is the second phase of the kingdom program and can be referred to as the "visible" kingdom, since Jesus' presence in rule is manifest (Acts 3:18–20; Rev. 20:1–6). In this latter sense, the idea of kingdom as physical rule fits traditional Jewish usage and the Israelite hope (Bock, 1080–1082).

11:21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed.

11:22 "But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.

A strong man, when fully armed, is capable of guarding his house and keeping his possessions. The only way that someone can take from him is if they are stronger than he is. When Jesus cast the demon out of the mute he took Satan's possession from his hand, demonstrating that He was stronger than the strong man (Satan).

Similarly, God says in Isaiah 49:24-25, "Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? Surely, thus says the LORD, 'Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, and the prey of the tyrant will be rescued'; for I will contend with the one who contends with you, and I will save your sons."

11:23 "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters."

The battle between Satan and God is an ongoing war, and one must choose sides. There is no neutral ground. Whoever does not consciously join Jesus is against Him. The one who does not gather with Jesus (that is, the one who does not participate with Him in His ministry) works against Him, and by inference, works against God.

This template is laid over the human race. You are either with Christ or against Him. It is not necessary to openly oppose Jesus or attack His word or character. It is not necessary to discredit the gospel or the church, or to persecute Christians. All that is necessary is to do nothing about Jesus Christ and you're in the same category as His enemies. You are either contributing to His kingdom, or you are against Him and fighting His kingdom.

IN SUM:

Luke 11:14–23 shows that Jesus' miraculous work is not an entertaining diversion from His ministry. His work forces people to decide on who He is, and contains a visual picture of what His ministry represents: either Satan's power or God's power.

The reality of Jesus' work forces a choice; no neutral ground can be taken. The one who is not joining to Jesus is against Him. The one who does not share with Him in gathering people for the kingdom is working against Him by preventing their entry. There is no fence to sit on. To decide against Jesus is to argue that His work is satanic, which Jesus shows to be impossible. To decide for Him is to share in the spiritual benefits that emerge from the victory of Jesus, the one who is stronger than Satan. Luke's readers are to make a choice or, having already made the choice, be reassured that their decision for Jesus is the correct one. In Jesus is found the presence of God's kingdom promise. In Him resides the authority to overcome the destructive forces that stand opposed to humankind, whatever they might be. The miracles of Jesus testify visibly to His authority – an authority etched by God's finger (Bock, 1084, 1085).

11:24 "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'

11:25 "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order."

11:26 "Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

Verses 24-26 have been variously interpreted. They are best understood by remembering the context. Jesus' casting out the demon displayed the work of God and showed that the kingdom of God has come (11:20). It also demonstrated that Jesus had overcome Satan (11:21-22). Jesus then challenged men to choose; everyone who is not consciously for Him is against Him (11:23). Verses 24- 26 then build upon the necessity of making a decision for Christ (11:23). In summarizing verses 24-26 Talbert writes, "It is not adequate, however, to cast out a demon if there is no acceptance of the kingdom of God whose

power is attested by its expulsion (11:24–26). Only God's rule of human life prevents the return of demonic activity, hence those are blessed who hear the word of God and keep it (27–28). Exorcism, then, is not evidence for Jesus being a magician, but rather for the inbreaking of God's rule in His ministry. In order to benefit permanently from this divine power, however, one must respond properly” (Talbert, 143, 144).

An unclean spirit is a demon. According to these verses, demons seek a place to dwell, a human to inhabit. Jesus states, “when the unclean spirit goes out of a man (when it is cast out), it passes through waterless places seeking rest.” “Waterless places” may simply signify uninhabitable regions. In other words, when a demon is cast out it seeks a new, habitable place to dwell. If it finds nothing, it may even return to the same person it was cast out of; that is, it says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” Upon returning it finds the person suitable to indwell once again; the “house” is swept and put in order. Matthew 12:44 adds that the demon “finds it unoccupied.” The demon is forced out; the house is swept clean, but there is nothing there to prevent it from reentering the person; the person is spiritually empty; he is thus “ready to host some kind of spiritual guest” (Bock, 1093). Only this time things are worse, for the demon invites seven other spirits in as well. This is not descriptive of what always happens; it explains what could happen. In other words, if the demon were to return and find that the “house” was not occupied, it could possibly bring other spirits with it.

The point is simple. “The picture is of a person who has experienced a great act of God, but has not responded to it, since the occupied house is left empty. The person has learned nothing and is still subject to the same demonic influence. The tragedy is that, by not responding, the opportunity for permanent reversal was lost. Failure to let God enter in has left the person in peril” (Bock, 1093).

11:27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed."

11:28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

Perhaps in an effort to demonstrate that not all were against Jesus, or simply as an expression of gratitude for Jesus’ ministry, a blessing is directed toward Jesus’ mother. The womb is seen as the source of life and the breasts as the source of nourishment (Danker, 235). In essence, the woman is praising God and calling Mary blessed for being the one who gave birth to Jesus and raised Him. She is indirectly saying that she is thankful that Jesus was born. But Jesus wasn’t interested in receiving peoples’ accolades. It is not enough to commend Jesus or honor Him. The one who is blessed is the one who responds to His teaching with action; the blessed are those who hear the word of God and *observe it*.