

Exorcism and Evidence that Demands a Verdict
Luke 11:14-23

Pastor Kelly R. Randolph
 July 26, 2020

Jesus's power over Satan reveals the arrival of God's kingdom and removes any illusion of neutrality about Jesus.

I. Jesus's power over Satan reveals the arrival of God's kingdom (vv. 14-22).

- A. Jesus cast out a demon.
 - 1. The demonic possession rendered the man unable to speak.
 - 2. Jesus cast out the demon and the man spoke.
- B. Three responses from the people.
 - 1. They marveled. It was undeniable that Jesus had done something supernatural.
 - 2. Some slandered Jesus by saying he cast out demons by the power of Satan.
 - a. The name Beelzebul was based on the name of one of the Canaanite gods called Baal. The name came to be associated with Satan, the prince of the demons.
 - b. They were accusing Jesus of using Satanic power to cast out demons.
 - 3. Some were skeptical and wanted more evidence. They wanted a sign from heaven. What they meant was some sort of spectacular, apocalyptic sign that signaled Jesus's authority in some way. They wanted more proof.
- C. Jesus argues that the exorcism of the demon reveals the arrival of God's kingdom.
 - 1. It makes no sense to say Jesus used Satan's power to cast out demons.
 - a. Why would Satan be divided against himself? Why would he use his power to dismantle his own kingdom? That makes no sense.
 - b. If you condemn Jesus for using Satan's power to cast out demons, by what power do the Jewish exorcists cast them out? Doesn't their accusation against Jesus condemn the exorcisms their disciples perform? Again, their logic is self-defeating.
 - 2. Jesus's power over Satan reveals the arrival of God's kingdom.
 - a. If Jesus casts out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
 - 1) The finger of God refers to the personal display of God's power. In Exodus 8:19, Pharaoh's magicians acknowledge the plagues as the "finger of God."
 - 2) The exorcisms Jesus performs are personal displays of God's power that signal the arrival of God's kingdom.
 - a) Luke 4:43 tells us that the kingdom of God was the focal point of Jesus's message.
 - b) The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. The reign of God as described in the OT included things like the mute shouting for joy (Isa. 35:6). The very miracle Jesus performed in this exorcism showed this.
 - b. Jesus has overcome Satan and taken the spoils of victory.
 - 1) Jesus uses an illustration to make his point. The strong man.

- 2) Jesus is stronger than Satan and has conquered him and taken the spoils of victory. He has overcome Satan and defeated him.

The fact that Jesus cast out the demonic spirit which possessed and oppressed the man demonstrated that Jesus overcame the strong man, defeated him and stripped him of his armor, and took the spoils of victory. But the decisive blow which forever broke the power of the devil was struck at the cross. Listen to what the Scriptures tell us.

- Colossians 2:13-15:

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities (terms describing demonic powers) and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

- Hebrews 2:14-15:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Friends, the cross was the ultimate defeat of Satan. By dying on the cross, Jesus disarmed Satan. He secured forgiveness for all who trust in him. It was the head-crushing blow to the serpent by the offspring of Eve promised in Genesis 3:15.

Carolyn Arends describes how this truth gripped her heart as a kid. She writes,

As a kid, I loved Mission Sundays, when missionaries on furlough brought special reports in place of a sermon There is one visit I've never forgotten. The missionaries were a married couple stationed in what appeared to be a particularly steamy jungle. I'm sure they gave a full report on churches planted or commitments made or translations begun. I don't remember much of that. What has always stayed with me is the story they shared about a snake.

One day, they told us, an enormous snake—much longer than a man—slithered its way right through their front door and into the kitchen of their simple home. Terrified, they ran outside and searched frantically for a local who might know what to do. A machete-wielding neighbor came to the rescue, calmly marching into their house and decapitating the snake with one clean chop. The neighbor reemerged triumphant and assured the missionaries that the reptile had been defeated. But there was a catch, he warned: It was going to take a while for the snake to realize it was dead.

A snake's neurology and blood flow are such that it can take considerable time for it to stop moving even after decapitation. For the next several hours, the missionaries were forced to wait outside while the snake thrashed about, smashing furniture and flailing against walls and windows, wreaking havoc until its body finally understood that it no longer had a head. Sweating in the heat, they had felt frustrated and a little sickened but also grateful that the snake's rampage wouldn't last forever. And at some point in their waiting, they told us, they had a mutual epiphany.

I leaned in with the rest of the congregation, queasy and fascinated. "Do you see it?" asked the husband. "Satan is a lot like that big old snake. He's already been defeated. He just doesn't know it yet. In the meantime, he's going to do some damage. But never forget that he's a goner."

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, Satan stepped up his game. Demonic activity was high. He was flexing his muscles in a big way. But Jesus put Satan on notice by casting out demonic spirits and delivering people from Satanic oppression. Then, on the cross, he cut the head off the snake. Yes, he is still writhing and thrashing. But his demise is certain.

The kingdom of God has come in Jesus Christ. Jesus proved it by overcoming Satan and demonstrating his superior power.

This reality has massive implications for your life and mine.

II. Because the kingdom has come in Jesus, you cannot be neutral toward him (v. 23).

- A. The kingdom of God has come in Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The exorcism itself is not the point. It is what the exorcism demonstrates.
 - 2. It demonstrates that the kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus.
 - a. The miracles of Jesus, including the casting out of demons, are a demonstrative proof that the kingdom of God has come.
 - b. The reign and rule of God is here and it comes through Jesus. Jesus is the focal point of the kingdom.
 - c. The kingdom is not fully consummated yet. That will happen in the future. But it is here and moving toward its completion.
- B. There can be no neutrality regarding Jesus and the kingdom.
 - 1. Whoever is not with Jesus is against Jesus.
 - a. This clearly applied to his open critics. Those who accused Jesus of casting out demons by demonic power were against him.
 - b. But Jesus leave not middle ground, no neutrality. There are only two options. You are actively with Jesus, believing in him, aligning your life with him or you are against him.
 - c. The kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus. There is no third option. As Charles Sheldon put it, "Jesus is a great divider of life. One must walk parallel with him or directly cross his way."
 - 2. Whoever does not gather with me scatters.
 - a. This is probably a harvest image. Gathering is a picture of harvest. It speaks of Jesus's mission.
 - b. People are either with Jesus, helping others come into the kingdom of God or they are against him and hindering others from coming to him.

You may be thinking, "I'm not a Christian but I'm not against Jesus. I think Jesus is a fine example, a good teacher, and I really like his principle of love. I'm not a committed follower of Jesus but I'm certainly not against him."

I can appreciate this kind of honesty about Jesus. But I want to tell you why it doesn't hold true. Let me suggest two reasons why you cannot be neutral about Jesus Christ.

- Because of who Jesus is. Jesus is not just another religious teacher. He is God who came to this earth as a human being. Just think of what the first chapter of John's gospel says about him.
 - He existed before creation began in eternal fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
 - He not only existed with God, he is God.
 - Through him all things were created.
 - He is God who came to this earth as a human being.
 - He is the unique revealer of God.
- Because of what Jesus does.
 - Only Jesus died on the cross to suffer the penalty our sins deserve.
 - Only Jesus rose from the dead and conquered sin and death forever.
 - Only Jesus has the authority to forgive our sins.
 - Only Jesus is the way to a relationship with God (John 14:6).
 - Only Jesus is the focal point of God's kingdom.

Because of who Jesus and is and what Jesus does, there can be no neutrality about him. To think that you can find a safe zone of middle ground about Jesus will not end well for you.

C.S. Lewis wrote about this in *Mere Christianity*. Writing about the return of Jesus, he said:

For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.

When it comes to Jesus, to say "I'm not going to pick a side" is to choose against him. There is no safe zone of neutrality. When Jesus comes to bring the kingdom into its full expression, choices are not being made. They are simply being revealed.

May I ask you straightforwardly, "Are you with Jesus or against him?" Will you trust in Jesus as the Lord and King of your life? Will you receive from him the gift of eternal life and enter into his kingdom?

Jesus has defeated the devil. He died and rose again. He proved he was the way the truth and life. To trust in Jesus is to receive life and to be transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into his kingdom forever. To not actively trust in Jesus is to reject him, whether out of active criticism or passive neglect. To reject Jesus is to reject all hope of life and salvation. It is to choose an eternity of darkness and separation and suffering in hell. Won't you trust in Jesus and receive the gift of eternal life?

You may say, "I have chosen to trust in Jesus. I am with Him, not against him." Praise God for that! Each day of our lives as believers we want to make sure that we are with Jesus in the way we follow him, love him, and demonstrate his love to others. Let your life be a testimony to him.