



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 11:14-26**

To understand the power of demons and the even greater power of Christ.

## A Kingdom Divided

In Luke 11:14-26, Jesus casts out a demon and then is criticized by unbelievers and is accused of essentially working the power of Satan himself: “But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons” (Lk. 11:15). Beelzebul is a Greek rendering of the Old Testament “Ba’al-z’bul” (בַּעַל זְבוּב), which simply meant “Prince Baal.” Baal was the false god of Ekron whom Ahaziah, king of Israel, tried to consult in his last illness (2 Kg. 1:1-6, 16). He is more clearly seen as an equivalent of Satan (as any false god would be), most notably in Mark’s Gospel (Mk. 3:22-23). Jesus’ critics are suggesting that Jesus’ power over the demons comes from the lord of the demons, Satan. Jesus responds by telling them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls” (Lk. 11:17).

Jesus’ words regarding a divided kingdom and a divided household almost certainly would have reminded the Jews of Solomon and the divided kingdom that came from his sin. Once the kingdoms were divided there was immediate wars over successions to the throne, and both kingdoms eventually fell to foreign powers as a result of divine judgment. Jesus’ point is clear; a kingdom that is divided will ultimately fall to its demise. It makes no sense, then, that the lord of demons would allow anyone to cast out his own house! It would be counterproductive to the enemy’s purposes. This means that Jesus’ power is drawn from some other source, and that becomes a major point of emphasis in this passage.

## Divine Power

Jesus continues His response to His opponents regarding how He is able to cast out demons. Below is a brief breakdown of some key themes and concepts.

### **KNOWING THEIR THOUGHTS**

The first indicator of Jesus' power comes in verse 17: "But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them." That Jesus knew their thoughts demonstrates the deity of Christ, for only God knows the thoughts of people (Ps. 139:2; 1 Chr. 28:9). Based on what He knew they were thinking, Jesus responded with some objections to their unbelieving thoughts.

### **YOUR SONS**

The first objection Jesus raises is the fact that other people have also been casting out demons. If Jesus' exorcisms are an expression of Satanic power, then all of them must be; they can't have it both ways. He refers to others as "your sons" (Lk. 11:19), which is likely just an expression that means "other Jewish people." Not only did Jesus' disciples perform exorcisms (Lk. 9:1-9, 10:17-20), but also other people as well that were not related to Jesus (Lk. 9:49).

### **THE FINGER OF GOD**

The second argument Jesus suggests is that His power is not from Satan, but Yahweh. Jesus says, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Lk. 11:20). The expression "finger of God" is substantial. The first time this phrase is found in Scripture is in *Exodus*. Moses and Aaron had been contending with Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, and Pharaoh would not relent. In judgment, God commanded Moses and Aaron to perform a number of signs that were plagues on Egypt due to Pharaoh's hardness of heart. In chapter 8, Aaron, "stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt" (Ex. 8:17). The court magicians of Pharaoh had been able to match some of these plagues through trickery, but this time was different. They "tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not" (Ex. 8:18). In defeat, they admitted to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19).

This phrase is found again in *Exodus* in chapter 31, when God gives to Moses the "two tablets" that contain the Ten Words (or, Ten Commandments). *Exodus* 31:18 says, "And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." This account is repeated in *Deuteronomy* 9:10, as well. Finally, *Psalm* 8:3 says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place." While not the exact phrase, the notion of God's fingers doing that which only God is capable of doing is intact.

Jesus' usage of this phrase is intentional. His point is that He is doing that which only God can do. God is able to give a binding law to humanity and He is able to create the moon and the stars and the sky, and He is able to exercise power over demons because He is God. That Jesus is doing this is a claim to divine power. If this is something only God can do, and Jesus is doing it, that means *Jesus is God*. While Satan may be the lord of the demons, Jesus is the Lord of all creation. Jesus further explains what this means: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil" (Lk. 11:21-22). While Satan might be strong, He is no match for Jesus. Jesus can take what He wants from Satan when He wants without warning or need for justification. There are no cosmic scales between good and evil; Satan is simply no match for Christ. Because of Christ's position of divine superiority, He can make ultimatums: "Whoever is not with

me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Lk. 11:23). Ultimately, there will be consequences for those who not only reject Jesus, but are complacent towards Him. Jesus leaves no room for softness towards other religions. To worship any other god in any other religious system is to reject the One, true God, and subsequently pay the consequences.

## More On Demons

Verses 24 through 26 emphasize a few important details regarding demons.

### **POWERFUL**

Demons should never be underestimated. They are powerful, supernatural creatures. Just because they are no match for Jesus does not mean they are no match for Jesus’ followers. Christians should never behave with pomp and bravado with regard to Satan and his emissaries. Just because a demon has been exorcised does not mean that individual is safe from ever being pursued by the demon again. Jesus warns: “Then it goes and brings 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” (Lk. 11:26). Simply removing the demon does not grant salvation; belief in the Gospel of Christ is also necessary, lest the individual become worse off than he/she was to begin with.

### **RELENTLESS**

Verse 24, at first glance, seems puzzling: “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’” What does Jesus mean by “waterless places?” There have been some suggestions that the arid, dry desert of the middle east is a place of demonic activity, and this is not totally without warrant. Revelation 18:2 says, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.” There are also some apocryphal, historical writings that indicate a similar sentiment. However, the most reasonable explanation is simply that the arid and waterless climate of the desert is not a place anyone would find rest in, and thus this is an expression that simply points to the restless nature of demons apart from a host. Demons desires to create chaos and disorder, and they do not stop until they find someone to destroy.

## What About Now?

The main theme of this passage is the deity of Christ. Jesus is God and because He is God He has authority over demons and even Satan himself. Beyond that, He has authority to demand absolute obeisance to Himself and His kingdom. Anyone who remains at best indifferent and at worst in opposition to Him will face the judgment of God (Rev. 20:11-15).

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 11:14. What did Jesus do? What was the crowds response?

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2. Read Luke 11:15-16. What were the two objections people were thinking about Jesus’ exorcism?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 11:17-19. In your own words, summarize Jesus' words. What was His point?

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2. Read Luke 11:20. What is the significance of the phrase "finger of God?" (Hint: See above notes)

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 11:21-22. Who is the strong man? Who is the stronger man? What is the meaning of this?

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2. Read Luke 11:23. What is Jesus' ultimatum and to whom does it apply?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 11:24. What does the "waterless places" refer to? (Hint: See above notes)

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2. Read Luke 11:25-26. What does the demon do when he returns to the host he was removed from?

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## Week 43 Discussion: Ultimatums

In Luke 11:23, Jesus gives an ultimatum of sorts: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." It's not enough to simply not be hostile towards Christ; Jesus demands total commitment. Talk as a group about this ultimatum and how it applies today.

1. Icebreaker: Do you believe Jesus is the only way to heaven? Why or why not? Use Scripture to support your answer.
2. Is it loving or unloving to tell someone that they will face judgment if they do not believe the Gospel?
3. Why does Jesus give this ultimatum? What do you think His intention is?
4. How does this ultimatum influence the importance of sharing the Gospel?
5. Are you comfortable sharing the Gospel with other people? Why or why not?
6. How can the church better equip you to actively and unapologetically share Jesus with others?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus makes it clear that His power is divine and that He is God.
2. Jesus teaches about the reality of demons and how exorcisms don't save; only Jesus can.