

RECOGNIZING THE FINGER OF GOD

Luke 11:14-26

THE FINGER OF GOD **Exod. 8:16-19 => Exod. 8:19**

The manifestation of "the finger of God" is used in Scripture as evidence that God is doing something—they better sit up and take notice!

Our Lord uses it to show the leaders of Israel that . . .

The supernatural evidence of God's power demands a verdict.

Either God is at work and the kingdom is coming

or Satan is at work against himself and about to destroy his own cause.

Which is more likely?

Nevertheless, in spite of the evidence that God is working, . . .

They're in danger of committing themselves to an irrevocable rejection of their Messiah.

Beginning a new theme—Luke has been painting a picture of their developing rejection, as Christ has been resolutely headed toward Jerusalem to die.

Now the author begins to deal with the . . .

CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTION **11:14-54**

Having shown the contrast between those who have chosen to follow Him and those who have rejected Him, Christ addresses the issue of Israel's rejection.

THEIR ACCUSATION **11:14-16**

Three responses to the supernatural evidence:

1. *How does the crowd react to the miracle?*

What are the other two responses? Why?

2. "Some of them said . . ."

– **impression it's a small group trying to turn the mass response.**

When they can't refute the evidence, they turn to *slander* to get Him.

"Beelzebub"

This name, given to the prince of demons, Satan, originally meant "lord of the princes." It has been corrupted to a pun meaning "lord of the flies."

One of the names of the Philistine god Baal (2 Ki. 1:1-3).

A variant is "Beelzebul" which means "lord of the dwelling"

and ties in with the Lord's illustrations in Luke 11:18-26.

The Jews often used this name when referring to Satan.

The issue of their rejection of the evidence comes to a climactic confrontation when the leaders accuse Christ of casting out demons by Satan's power.

How clever of those who hold to Satan's main doctrinal tenet: "I'd rather do it myself"—accuse the one who brought the alternative of being Satan's representative.

Satan's emissaries always come dressed as angels of light.

They make his way look so good!

Is He Satan's representative?

We'll see our Lord's answer to the charge.

There's a third response, . . .

3. Others ask for a sign from heaven. **11:16**

The passage says it was a test—not a sincere request for evidence.

Some suggest "from heaven" as a contrast to "on earth" in order to emphasize that they want a sign from God.

In any case, after the signs already done, it is clear they want something more – an undeniable sign-proof that He is from God.

JESUS' DEFENSE 11:17-36

Jesus responds to the two statements of rejection with **two discourses**:

The first, **11:14-26**, responds to the charge that He "casts out demons" by the power of Satan.

The second, **11:29-36**, responds to the call for a "sign from heaven."

In response to the charge that He does such a remarkable feat by the power of Satan, all recognize that this **IS** a **supernatural** accomplishment. No one questions that.

To discredit the miracle, they attribute the power to Satan, rather than God.

Luke uses the incident to show that the *supernatural nature* of **the evidence of God's power in Jesus' ministry demands a verdict** (11:14-23).

There are only two choices: either God is at work and thereby has demonstrated the coming of His kingdom, or Satan is at work against himself and about to destroy his own cause.

To focus on the evidence that He's NOT Satan's emissary, our Lord uses four arguments:

1. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM 11:17-18

His first argument is that their conclusion is illogical.

If He got His power from Satan, and used that power against Satan, then Satan would be working against himself; and this was inconceivable.

Why would Satan fight against himself and divide his own kingdom?

John Martin: "It would be ridiculous for Satan to drive out his own demons, for then he would be weakening his position and kingdom."

Jesus never makes a compromise with "the prince of demons." – But *they* had!

In dealing with the four arguments against their accusation that He is Satan's representative, our Lord teaches us four lessons concerning Satan:

SATAN WON'T ALLOW HIS EMISSARIES TO WASTE THEIR TIME FIGHTING ONE ANOTHER – They know who the Enemy is!

2. THE EXORCISTS 11:19-20

What about their own exorcists?

Some Israelites practised exorcism and cast demons out of the afflicted.

When *they* did it, they claimed it was the power of God working through them.

Their own exorcists fit within the system; they didn't make waves.

It's O.K. to recognize *their* work as the power of God.

But they don't like what He's up to. He doesn't fit their mold.

So they have to get Him.

The problem is: *How can you tell the difference?*

At best, this is a hard question to answer. *What's the objective criteria?*

On what basis do you distinguish between your own exorcists, that you recognize as being from God, and Jesus?

This is a proof that the kingdom of God is present; not the kingdom of Satan.

11:20 – This is ***"the finger of GOD"***

When the magicians of Egypt were unable to duplicate Moses' miracles, they said "this is the finger of God" (Exo. 8:19). So it is now.

It is either Satanic supernaturalism, or it is the finger of God.

If it is in fact the finger of God, then Jesus' driving out demons is a Messianic sign and the kingdom of God has come. *Do they want to identify with it or not?*

John, and our Lord's prophetic announcements had said it had come near.

Now the announcement is made: if this is the finger of God (and it is) then the Kingdom has now arrived!

Are they willing to take that risk? They had better be sure!

Implication:

SATAN IS AN EXPERT COUNTERFEITER—HE IS CAPABLE OF MAKING HIS WORKS LOOK LIKE THE WORKS OF GOD.

3. THE STRONG MAN 11:21-23

Jesus is greater than Satan and is overcoming his kingdom.

This is really a confession of the greatness of His power.

As long as a fully-armed strong man is in control, no one can touch him or his possessions.

We've seen a lot of that kind of power in our day. Look at attempts to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Someone stronger had to come along before he's overthrown and his territory and possessions taken.

Don't miss the first part of the comparison!

Satan is a fully-armed strong man.

He totally possesses his citadel and won't readily surrender it to anyone!

The passage doesn't suggest the possibility of a sneak attack—only defeat by One Who is stronger.

Spurgeon: "You may find sleeping saints, but never sleeping devils."

Satan will defend his strongholds against his Adversary.

Before a man can invade a guarded citadel, he must be able to overpower the guards. Only then can he enter the fortress.

Jesus has more power than they can explain naturally.

If He has enough power to enter Satan's citadel, enough power to overcome Satan—He must be stronger than Satan.

He can take those things that used to belong to "the strong man" and do as he pleases with them ("distribute them")

Thus **Christ calls on them to make a decision.**

11:23 – Negative expression used when referring to one who has chosen to identify with Him:

"He who is not against you is for you" 9:50

– Positive expression used when referring to one who has chosen not to identify with Him:

"He who is not with me is against me" 11:23

Satan is scattering and destroying; but Jesus is gathering and building.

Whose program would you rather be part of? You must make a choice!

It's impossible to remain neutral. There can be no compromise.

You have to make a choice!

Not all religions are equal and alike.

There is truth and there is falsehood.

Jesus said: *"I am THE way . . . No man comes to the Father, but by Me!"*

There is no other way!

Will you recognize the finger of God and join Him, or will you buy the phony excuses of the Pharisees and join them in rejecting Him?

SATAN IS A STRONGMAN—HE WILL DEFEND TO THE DEATH HIS TERRITORY AND POSSESSIONS—It takes someone stronger than he is to defeat him.

4. THE EVIL SPIRIT 11:24-26

The generation that rejects Jesus is *compared* to the demon-possessed man whose efforts at self-renovation only serve to create a more miserable condition (without regeneration).

"Passing through the waterless places" may be a reference to the desert as the abode of the demons who are not currently possessing a body.

Although this passage, taken by itself, could refer to an individual who has experienced exorcism without regeneration [that's what the comparison refers to, but that's not His point here], parallel passages indicate that **Christ applies the illustration (principle) to this generation (Matt. 12:43-45 – "That is the way it will also be with this evil generation")**.

(1) Foreign Dominion = Restoration and Reconstruction

Christ might be referring to Israel's effort to be free from foreign political domination. In this case, the "unclean spirit" would be the Gentiles who controlled Israel for generations.

After God's judgment in A.D. 70, Israel's condition would be worse than it had been before [and it was!]

*** (2) Repentance under John = a Spiritual Awakening**

Another possibility: Jesus is referring to Jewish preparation for Messiah under John's ministry.

John carried on a ministry of calling people to repentance.

Multitudes respond to his ministry, acknowledging their sin.

These identify with John by baptism, with a view to experiencing the forgiveness of sin when Messiah, Whom they're anticipating, comes. Thus the nation is cleansed.

Their rejection of Jesus leaves Israel's house empty, but all cleaned up.

They were still his turf ["my house"] because they didn't surrender themselves to God.

Their progressive rejection of Jesus brings about spiritual deterioration.

They're going downhill.

When they finalize their rejection of Him, they're in worse spiritual condition than they were before John began his ministry.

Being empty is not enough.

Just not having wrong practice or belief won't do.

We must refill the emptiness with Jesus. HE is the One who gives new life

SATAN WON'T LEAVE AN EMPTY HOUSE UNOCCUPIED—Unless it is filled by the Spirit of God, he will come back and take it over!

That's true whether you're talking about a nation or an individual.

It's impossible to be neutral in this spiritual war.

We must make a choice! What will it be?

**WHAT LESSON DO WE NEED TO LEARN FROM THIS DISCUSSION?
GOD HOLDS US RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIGHT RECEIVED.**

If we reject what He shows us,
even what we have will be taken away.