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Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Luke 11:14-26

Bible Reading: Luke 11:14-26 CSB

14 Now [Jesus] was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon came out, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. 15 But some of them said, “He drives out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” 16 And others, as a test, were demanding of him a sign from heaven.

17 Knowing their thoughts, [Jesus] told them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and a house divided against itself falls. 18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say I drive out demons by Beelzebul. 19 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges. 20 If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:14-20 CSB)

The Stronger Man vs. the Strong Man

21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his estate, his possessions are secure. 22 But when one stronger than he attacks and overpowers him, he takes from him all his weapons he trusted in, and divides up his plunder. 23 Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters. (Luke 11:21-23 CSB)

An Unclean Spirit's Return

24 “When an unclean spirit comes out of a person, it roams through waterless places looking for rest, and not finding rest, it then says, ‘I’ll go back to my house that I came from.’ 25 Returning, it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and

they enter and settle down there. As a result, that person's last condition is worse than the first." (Lk. 11:24-26 CSB)

SUMMARY:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" is true—but incomplete. In Luke 11, Christ shows both compassion and confrontation. He mercifully frees a man from demonic oppression, yet is immediately slandered by religious leaders who claim He works by Beelzebul. This is not honest skepticism, but a willful rejection of God's power. Jesus' answer reveals the deeper reality: His miracles signal the arrival of God's kingdom and the defeat of Satan's. He is the stronger man who overpowers the enemy and liberates captives. This is spiritual warfare, not metaphor. But Jesus goes further—deliverance is not the end. An empty house invites infiltration; an unfilled soul remains vulnerable. Christ does not merely cleanse; He indwells. His aim is not surface reform but Spirit-filled transformation. Where He reigns, the enemy has no claim. True freedom means being filled, not just emptied—and living under His rule daily. We cooperate by guarding against spiritual vacuums.

1. Jesus is at War with Satan

a. Jesus' War with Satan

- "In [Jesus'] ministry God has gone to war against Satan...Jesus' announcement of the...kingdom of God means war with the kingdom of Satan...Jesus' under[stood]...his mission in terms of war with Satan...Jesus & his disciples are attacking the kingdom of Satan, freeing those who are bound. The real war is a spiritual one." [Craig A. Evans, "Jesus, Satan, & Holy War...", K. Davis (ed.) War Scroll, Violence, ...in the Dead Sea Scrolls..., pp. 341-7]
- "Exorcisms...are not simply the release...of a few benighted souls...For Jesus...they signalled something far deeper ...the real battle of the ministry...[a] head-on war with the Satan." [NT Wright, Jesus & the Victory of God, p. 195]

b. Jesus' continuous Struggle/Conflict/Battle with Satan

- "Jesus' entire ministry was one continuous conflict with Satan...Jesus' exorcisms are...the invasion of Satan's realm and the victory of the Kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan." [Mark L. Strauss, Mark, p. 740]
- "Jesus' ministry [w]as...[a] continual struggle between God's Spirit and the demons, who belong to Satan's 'kingdom'." [Elaine Pagels, Origin of Satan, p. xvii]
- Mark recounts "Jesus' continuous battle with Satan & satanic forces." [Michael J. Morris, Warding Off Evil, p. 19]
- "The work...[of] Jesus' ministry...indicates the defeat of evil. The 'battle' Jesus had with forces opposed to God & to humanity is evident in all of this interaction." [Darrell Bock, Op. cit., p. 2873]
- "The Gospels' most significant claim...is that Jesus was engaged in a conflict with these spiritual forces [Satan & demons] & that he, along with his faithful followers, would be the victor in this conflict." [Ryan E. Stokes, "Satan & Demons in...Gospels,"

c. Evans (ed.) Handbook on...Jewish Roots of...Gospels, p. 248] C. Luke's Warfare Metaphors

- Luke's "primary...metaphor...[of] the relationship between Jesus and Satan is in terms of WARFARE." – K. Perry
- "Luke understands the relationship between Jesus & Satan is in terms of WARFARE...SATAN IS THE LEADER OF AN ENEMY NATION [Kingdom]... [&] Satan [is] an ENEMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF." [Katherine Perry, ...Demonology of Luke's Gospel, University of Oxford, UK. (2020) p. vii (Emphasis original)]

d. Satan is at War with Jesus (& God)

- With Satan, "the power of evil...there is war against Jesus of Nazareth..." [Darrell Bock, 'Jesus, Satan, & Company,' S. Porter (ed.) Handbook for Study of the Historical Jesus, p. 2858]

e. Cosmic Battle/War

- “The events of the [4th] Gospel [are] ‘a cosmic battle that rages between God & his Messiah vs. Satan & the world’ (A. Kostenberger).” [A. van Oudtshoorn, “Where Have all the Demons Gone?” *Neotestamentica*, V. 51.1 (2017) p.]
- “The NT gospels...place Jesus in [a]...cosmic war...Jesus...challenge[ed] the evil forces...The powers of evil challenged & attacked him at every turn, & he [Jesus] attacked them back –& won.” [Elaine Pagels, “Social History of Satan, Part II,” *JAAR*, Vol. LXII, #1, p. 17]
- “Luke describes...Jesus’ ...extended [rebuttal] to the accusation of being demonized, showing the implacable hostility between God and Satan.” [Richard Harvey, *Judas Iscariot, Betrayal...*, p. 105]

f. Jesus’ Cosmic Victory over Satan & Demons

- “Luke’s message [is] of a cosmic victory of Jesus over Satan & demonic powers...The...inbreaking of the kingdom of God with...Jesus & the resulting defeat of the devil & evil powers... [means] the dominance of the devil...is replaced with the kingdom of God. This reversal in the cosmic realm... enables...reversals [in the earthly realm].” [Keith A. Reich, *Figuring Jesus*, p. 98]

2. The Precipitating Exorcism– 3 Kinds of Response (Lk. 11:14-16)

“Now [Jesus] was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon came out, the man who had been mute spoke, & the crowds were amazed. 15 But some of them said, “He drives out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” 16 And others, as a test, were demanding of him a sign from heaven.” (11:14-16)

a. The Demon made the Man Dumb (Mute)

- “The demon in some way prohibited the man from speaking. The demon is distinguished from ‘Satan’ (11:18), who is the prince of demons. ‘The mute man spoke.’ Proof that the demon has been cast out. [ESV]

b. Jesus’ Exorcism: Not just Healing, but to Advance God’s Kingdom (& Diminish Satan’s)

- The purpose of “Jesus’ exorcism ministry ‘was not only the relief of suffering, but the clash of the Kingdom of God & the Kingdom of the Devil.’” [G.J. Riley, “Demon,” K. van der Toorn (ed.) *Dictionary of Deities & Demons*, p. 239]

c. Three Kinds of Response

- a. Positive: “The crowds were amazed” (11:14) These “contemporaries [of Jesus] remarked favorably upon seeing works of power that from their experience were simply unprecedented.” –Craig Evans
- b. Negative: “Some...said, “He drives out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons” (Luke 11:15). These contemporaries of Jesus “recognized the unprecedented nature of Jesus’ works of power, but chose to find the source of these works not in God but in Satan.” – Craig Evans
 - They “allege that he worked ‘by the power of Beelzebul’ (Mt. 12:24), suggesting demonic collusion rather than divine endorsement...Jesus’ opponents saw him as more than a misguided teacher—they saw the possibility of a dangerously deceiving figure.” –Gideon Tambiyi
 - “The [Pharisees (Mt. 12:24) & scribes (Mk. 3:22)] are ‘slandorous,’ defaming Jesus by attributing his exorcisms to the power of Beelzebub (Mt. 9:32-34; 12:22-24).” –Jack D. Kingsbury

- c. Non-Committal: “Others...were demanding of him a sign from heaven.” (11:16)

3. Who Is Beelzebul/Beelzebub?

a. The Pagan god: Beelzebul (Baal Zebul) Baal Zebub

- “In the NT there are references to Baal...Where Baal is clearly a rivalling ‘false’ deity in the OT, evangelists Mark (in 3:22), Matthew (in 12:24, 27) & Luke (in 11:15, 18) describe Baal (Beelzebub) [Beelzebul] as the prince of demons. However, Mk. 3:23, 26, Mt. 12:26, & Lk. 11:18 all similarly describe & relate this former deity [Beelzebul] directly with Satan.” [M. Dieteren “Baal in the OT,” p. 4]
- “In Ugaritic texts, Baal is “lord of Zaphon” (ba’al tsapanu). He is also called a “prince” (zbl in Ugaritic). Another of Baal’s titles is “prince, lord of the underworld” (zbl ba’al ’arts)...It is no surprise that zbl ba’al becomes Baal Zebul (Beelzebul) and Baal Zebub, titles associated with Satan in later Jewish literature & the NT.” [Michael Heiser, “Foe from the North,” *Lion & Lamb Apologetics*, p. 4]
- “With the discovery of the Ugaritic texts & finding there of Baal’s frequent epithet zbl b’l, ‘Prince Baal’ the view gained support that Baal-zebub is a deliberate distortion of this...The name Baal-zebub was known to the Jews. [It] is attested in the NT, where Beelzebul has become the name of the Prince of the

Demons, Satan (Mt. 10:25 [etc.]...)” [John Day, *Yahweh & the Gods & Goddesses of Canaan*, pp. 79-80]

b. OT Baalzebub: “Lord of the Flies” (2 Kings 1:2-3)

- Israel’s King “Ahaziah had fallen [from]...his upstairs room...and was injured. So he sent messengers, instructing them, “Go inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I’ll recover from this injury.” 3 But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah...“Go & meet the messengers of the king of Samaria & say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’” (2 Kings 1:2-3 CSB)
- Israel’s King “Ahaziah, after being critically injured in Samaria, solicits a prognosis from Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron. This evolves into a confrontation with Elijah...Baalzebub, ‘Lord of the Flies,’ [was] a god worshipped in Ekron...This form of the name, however, may be the author’s purposeful corruption of ‘Baalzebub’ ...understood as a reference to Baal... In the NT, Jesus denies that he casts out demons... in the name of Baal-zebub (Mt. 12:24-27).” [JPS, *Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 726-7]
- “Ekron was an important Philistine city [in Gaza] about...40 km west of Jerusalem. Baal-zebub means “lord of the flies” and is probably a deliberate Hebrew corruption of “Baal-zebub”...intended to express the authors’ scorn of or hostility toward this “deity.” [King] Ahaziah looks for help from this local manifestation of the god Baal, perhaps regarding the Ekron...version of the deity as especially powerful.’ [ESV]
- “The god...in 2 Kings 1:2 is the Canaanite storm & fertility deity Baal-Hadad, in one of his ...localized manifestations. Here, he is Baal-Zebub...taken to mean “Baal/lord of the Flies’. ...Possibly a deliberate Israelite corruption of “BaalZebul” (“Baal the Prince”) ...express[ing] the Biblical authors’ scorn of/hostility toward this deity...[Israel’s king] Ahaziah...sends messengers on a 100 km. trip for... consultation... [since] a localized manifestation of Baal can only be consulted in his locale [territorial gods]” [Walton, Keener, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, p. 618]
- “The Hebrew Bible may include a deliberate corruption of the title in Baalzebub, god of Ekron (2 Kgs. 1:2-3) which comes...into the [Greek] LXX as ‘lord of the fly,’ perhaps ‘Baal the fly god of Ekron’ (2 Kgs. 1:2-4, ...high-lighting the confrontation between opposing spiritual forces).” [Craig Keener, *Mark*, Vol. 1, p.]

c. Jesus’ Beelzebub Controversy Linked to the Elijah Story (2 Kgs. 1)

- “Beelzebub is, according to the story of Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:2-17a) the name of the god of Ekron, one of the Philistine cities...thus a foreign deity...For the embassy of an Israelite King to inquire of him concerning his paralysis...is an act of apostasy; this is the burden of Elijah’s words...Jesus’ challengers identify the god of Ekron [Beelzebub] with Satan...[This] provide[s] a specific connection to the gospels’ model story [of Elijah/Elisha].” [Wolfgang Roth, *Hebrew Gospel: Cracking the Code of Mark*, p. 51]
- “‘Beelzebub’ is derived from...a pagan deity...likely the Philistine god referenced in 2 Kings 1 (Baal-Zebub/l) ...The ancient name...from the OT, was likely revived by Jews in Jesus’ day ...Given the Jewish practice of identifying pagan deities [‘gods’] with demons, it’s natural to think of this supreme god as the prince of demons. The scribes... were accusing Jesus of [using] pagan magic...an idolatrous name...and the demonic powers behind it, to accomplish his exorcisms.” [Jeremy D. Otten, “Devil in the Details: Beelzebub...,” *Religions*, V. 14(8) (2023) p.]
- “Jesus is accused...not...abstractly [of] collusion with demons. In wording the accusation in terms of “Beelzebub”, they have...framed it not just in demonic terms but also pagan [terms]. This detail ‘raises the stakes’...The scribal accusation seeks to discredit Jesus publicly as a ‘black sheep’.” [Jeremy D. Otten, *Op. cit.*, p]

d. The Accusations against Jesus (Mark 3:22)

- During “Jesus’ ministry ...not everyone is favorably impressed with him. Now the opposition is focussed ... [on] specific lines of attack (Lk. 11:15-16). The first concerns his deliverance of those who were demon-possessed...An attempt to turn [Jesus’] exorcisms against him now leads to a ‘debate’ in which the underlying significance of this [exorcism] ministry is explored. Jesus is not merely a successful village preacher & healer; he is God’s agent in the decisive overthrow of the power of evil.” [RT France, *Luke*, p]
- Note: Matthew identifies the accusers as ‘Pharisees’ (12:24). Mark calls them ‘Scribes’ (3:22). In Mark the accusation goes further & declares Jesus to be possessed by Beelzebub. Luke more generally identified the accusers as “some of the people” (11:15). [ESV]
 - a. Not denying Jesus’ Exorcisms, but impugning the Source (Power)

- “The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” & “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” (Mk. 3:22 ESV) ‘Prince’ Gk.: archon
- “The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” &, “He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons.” (Mk. 3:22 CSB)
- In Mk 3 and its parallels...Beelzebul is the name of the demon allegedly empowering Jesus.” –Jeremy Otten
- “Mark has two [accusations] [1.] ‘that [Jesus] is possessed by Beelzebul, & [2.] that he cast out demons with the power of the Prince of demons.’ [Mk. 3:22] ...Luke & Matthew’s... accounts have only one: ‘that he casts out the demons by the power of Beelzebul, the Prince of demons’ [Mt. 12:24b; Lk. 11:15].” [Santiago Guijarro, “Politics of Exorcism,” Biblical Theology Bulletin, Vol 29 (2009) p. 120]
- “In the view of these opposers...Jesus’ exorcisms are a feint [fake gesture] by Satan against himself, designed, apparently, to convey the false impression that Jesus is on the divine side in the conflict between the devil & God [when, actually he’s on Satan’s side (in their view)].” [Joel Marcus, “Beelzebul Controversy,” in BD. Chilton (ed.) Authenticating...Jesus, p. 247]

b. By Beelzebul: the ruler/prince of demons (Mk. 3:22; Mt. 10:25; 12:24; Lk. 11:15)

- “Jesus is accused of being empowered by Satan, enabling him to cast out demons... Beelzebul (Beelzebou/l) occurs 7 times in the Gospels, all in reference to the accusation leveled against Jesus that his remarkable success in exorcism is due to the assistance of Beelzebul, the “prince of demons” (Mt. 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18, 19)...” [Craig A. Evans, “Jesus & the Spirits,” pp. 2-3]
- “Jesus’ exorcistic and healing power is such that his critics accused him of being in league with Satan himself: “He is possessed by Beelzebul, & by the prince of demons he casts out the demons” (Mk. 3:22; cf. Mt. 9:32–34; 12:24; Lk. 11:15; Jn. 7:20 “You have a demon!”, 8:48, [etc.]).” [Craig A. Evans, Op. cit., p. 6]

c. Devastating Slander; Character Assassination

- Some observers [scribes, Pharisees?] “accuse [Jesus] of performing these exorcisms by the power of “Beelzebul, the ruler of demons.” This accusation is... ‘deviance labeling.’ To label someone as a deviant [means]...they were being or...acting outside of the norm for their stereotype. Such a designation “could seriously undermine a person’s place & role in the community,” & once applied, “be nearly impossible to shake” (Malina & Rohrbaugh). Jesus’ opponents here accuse him of being a deviant by casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. They seek to undermine his credibility.” [Eric Futrell, “Luke’s Account of the Beelzebul Controversy (Lk. 11:14-26)” (July 2022) p. 7]
- “In the ancient world, “the charge of being a magician or engaged in sorcery was a very effective way to discredit an enemy & put an end to his career.” [Sean Freyne, World of the NT, Vol. 2, p. 26]
- “Some such charge remained for some centuries a staple element of rabbinic Jewish polemic against Jesus as a magician who by his black arts ‘led Israel astray.’ It assumes the reality of a supernatural power, but questions its name and origin. We have therefore moved ...to the realm of personal abuse and character assassination. The accusation of complicity with the devil is...extremely offensive...[&] intended to destroy Jesus’ credibility ...[with the] God-fearing public.” [RT. France, Matthew, p. 475]
- “The Beelzebul controversy is key to understanding...the relationship between demons and the devil [Satan] &... why...Jesus’ exorcisms...[are] important.” [Torsten Lofstedt, Devil, Demons...& ‘Jews,’ p. 70]

e. Greek: Beel (=Aramaic) = Baal (Hebrew)

- “The designation Beel is the customary Greek transliteration of the Aramaic Baal, meaning ‘owner,’ ‘lord,’ or ‘prince’...and poses no difficulty in interpretation. The problem arises with the...meaning of zebul.” [Michael L. Humphries, Christian Origins & the Language of the Kingdom of God, p. 14]
- “We cannot prove historically that the Jews customarily considered Beelzebul the ‘ruler of demons,’ ... the logic of the association is clear...from [Baal] ‘lord of the earth’ to lord of the demons (Satan) ... inasmuch as all foreign deities are [considered] demons... Hence, [there’s] the possibility...that the association Beelzebul = ruler of demons = Satan makes its first appearance [here] ...when Jesus’ detractors accuse him of casting out demons by Beelzebul.” [Michael L. Humphries, Op. cit., p. 21]
- “It is clear that Beelzebul represents a deity... associate[ed] with demons and Satan results...because Beelzebul is a foreign deity... [So,] the charge of collusion with Beelzebul [is] a charge of deviance: ‘Jesus is not one of us; he is not a child of Israel but a child of Beelzebul’.” [Michael L. Humphries, Op. cit., p. 22]
- In Mark 3:22–30. The scribes argued that Jesus must have been possessed by Beelzebul in order to expel [demons]. Jesus countered them with a question: [“How can Satan drive out Satan?”] (3:23b) Based on the charge that Jesus should expel [demons] in league with Beelzebul, the subject [Satan’ –

“How can Satan....” refers to Beelzebul, while the object [“Satan”- “cast out Satan, refers”] to the [demons] he expels.... Jesus...[tells] the accusing scribes that Satan and the [demons] are on the same side, & it is nonsense for them to be in discord with one another...Jesus says that Satan is too smart to do such a foolish thing that causes his kingdom, house, or himself to be divided from within to hasten his doom.” Beelzebul was an Aramaic term referring to the head of the Gentile deities in Galilee but not a standard term for Satan in 2nd Temple Judaism.” [Young K. Kim, *Enoch Traditions & Jesus’ Exorcisms in Mark*, DTS (Aug. 2019) p. 164]

- “The term [Beelzebul] doesn’t seem to have been a standard Jewish term of 2nd Temple Judaism...It does not appear in extant Jewish literature...The scribes seem to have used the term known to Galileans as a way of defaming Jesus & appealing to their audience. Galileans may have identified Beelzebul with the head of foreign deities...Beelzebul was an Aramaic term referring to the head of the Gentile deities in Galilee but not a standard term for Satan in Second Temple Judaism.” [Young K Kim, *Op. cit.*, pp. 164-7]
- “Jesus’...unique authority over the demons...[was] puzzling for those around him, and his human opponents ...capitalize[d] on the confusion...offering a damning solution: Jesus must be in league with Satan himself. In fact, Jesus must be possessed by Beelzebul & secretly channelling Satan’s authority over the demons in order to cast them out. This attack surely has nefarious motives & is logically flawed, but it...offer[s] a compelling solution to the puzzle of Jesus’ unrivalled authority over the demonic realm.” [John P. Voigt, *Jesus: Divine Exorcist*, Durham University, UK., (2025) p. 206]

f. Beelzebul Appears at Armageddon—the Ultimate Battle

- “Armageddon is about...the unbelieving nations, empowered by the antichrist, empowered by the prince of darkness –Lord (ba’al) of the dead, prince Baal (zbl ba’al), Beelzebul–...make one last, desperate effort to defeat Jesus at the place where Yahweh holds council, Mount Zion, Jerusalem. Revelation & Zechariah agree. Armageddon is a battle for all the supernatural & earthly ‘marbles’ at Jerusalem.” [Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm* (expanded ed.) p. 101]

4. Beelzebul equals Satan; Jesus ‘transposes’ the Issue to the Cosmic Sphere

- 24 When the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man drives out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” 25 Knowing their thoughts, [Jesus] told them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges. 28 If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matt. 12:24-28 CSB)

a. ‘Satan’ is equivalent to Beelzebul

- In Mk. 3, & Mt. 12 “Jesus replaces [Beelzebul’s name], apparently without confusion, with the name ‘Satan’... The scribes speak of ‘Beelzebul’...to discredit...Jesus...whereas Jesus’ reference to ‘Satan’ reframes the discussion [as] ...the cosmic battle between those who do God’s will & the one who opposes it.” [Jeremy D. Otten, *Op. cit.*, p.]
- “Satan called Beelzebul, is the chief of demons (Mk. 3:23) ...We have good reasons to assume that for Mark, Beelzebul = Satan... The question proposed in Mk. 3:23 ‘How can Satan expel a Satan?’ ...indicates that Beelzebul = Satan and the demons...belong to the same category. Thus, a principal differentiation between Satan & demons would seem inappropriate. Satan does not differ essentially from the demons.” [Jan Doehorn, “Devil in...Mark,” I. Fröhlich (ed.) *Evil & the Devil*, p. 104]
- “The use of both [‘Satan’] & [Beelzebul’] for the chief of demons shows that the two terms are equivalent for Matthew [Mt. 12:24-27].” [Michael J. Morris, *Warding Off Evil*, p. 24]
- “[‘The Satan’] and [‘Beelzebul’] are two terms for the same figure.” –Jan Doehorn
- “Jesus’ response essentially renders the figures of Beelzebul & Satan as equivalent.” –Jerome Wilczynski
- “...Nearly all scholars identify Beelzebul with Satan.” [Craig Keener, *Mark*, Vol. 1, p.] • “Beelzebul came to be used as a name for Satan [in the Synoptic Gospels] (Mt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18, 19).” [Brill, *Appendix on Beelzebul, Beelzebub...*, p. 151]
- “Pharisees accuse Jesus...saying, “This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons” (Mt. 12:24)...Jesus responds, “If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided

against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? (12:26) ... But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (12:28). Jesus’ response essentially renders the figures of Beelzebul and Satan as equivalent here, & Satan clearly has a kingdom. Because it makes no sense for a kingdom to be working against itself, Jesus asserts that he is on the side of God’s kingdom...We see here that Satan’s kingdom includes demons... and it is opposed to God’s kingdom.” [Jerome Wilczynski, “Misunderstood Satans of the Christian Bible,” (Aug. 2016) p. 19]

b. Avoiding the ‘Root Fallacy’

- “Beelzebul: The word is of disputed etymology [the word’s original root meaning], but probably originally meant ‘Lord (Baal) of the House’ ...Already in the OT it had been corrupted to the pejorative Beelzebub, ‘Lord of the Flies’ (2 Kgs. 1:2)...By Mark’s time ‘the etymology [the word’s root meaning] had long since been forgotten; so, ‘Even though ‘Beelzebul’ is etymologically unrelated to ‘Satan,’ by the time the Synoptics were written,’ it [‘Beelzebul’] had become a common designation for the devil, like Satan...” [E. Boring, F Craddock, People’s NT Commentary, p 119]
- “Whatever the origin of the term [Beelzebul]...for readers...it’s simply another name for Satan” – R. Stein
- “Although there is no pre-Christian literary evidence that Beelzebul was a name given to Satan, in Mark the terms ‘ruler of the demons,’ ‘Satan,’ & ‘Beelzebul’ are used interchangeably.” [R. Stein, Mark, p. 205]
- “3 terms, Satanas [‘Satan’], diablos [Devil], & Beelzebul, refer to the same cosmic adversary & opponent of God.” [Kees F. De Blois, “How to Deal with Satan?” Bible Translator, V. 37, #3 (1986) p. 301]

c. ‘Beelzebul’: has Pagan Associations; ‘Satan’: cosmic

- Jesus “shift[s] to speaking of ‘Satan,’ in place of Beelzebul...‘Beelzebul’ & ‘Satan’ [are] more or less interchangeable; certainly, they are presented that way...Yet, while ‘Beelzebul’ implies pagan association ...to speak of ‘Satan’ reframes the context...[to Jesus’] cosmic battle against God’s enemy.” –Jeremy Otten
- Lk. 11:14-26 & “parallels identify Beelzebul with Satan, making Satan the prince or ruler of the demons. This term, “prince,” is the Greek archon, meaning the highest official for designated area. It...was first applied to the spiritual realm in ...Daniel, where the archangel Michael is called a ‘prince,’ as well as...“the prince of...Persia” [&] ...‘the prince of Greece’ (Dan. 10:13, 20; 12:1).” [Eric Futrell, Op. cit., p. 8]
- In Mark “The first charge continually leveled...against Jesus by the scribes accuses him of being possessed by Beelzebul ...The second charge...against Jesus accuses him of casting out demons by the ‘prince of demons’ ...The expression ‘ruler of demons’ serves as a synonym for Beelzebul (Mt. 12:24; Lk. 11:15).” [RH. Stein, Mark, p. 204]
- “The text of Mark itself directs us how to take the name [Beelzebul]... a double charge...equates ‘Beelzebul’ with ‘the prince of demons’ [&] also...Jesus recasts [it] under the name ‘Satan’ (Mk. 3:23) ...Satan is...the cosmic force in power over companies of demons...Mark’s use of...Satan (=Beelzebul – prince of demons) fits the thought world of Second Temple Judaism... In Mark’s text, Beelzebul is the ruler of demons, equivalent to Satan, who directs demons to afflict people on earth.” [Elizabeth E. Shively, Op. cit., p. 60]
- “If Yahweh is the true lord of heaven who rules over all (‘Heaven is my throne...earth...my footstool’ Is. 66:1) ...‘Beelzebul’ [is] the pseudo-lord of heaven who rules over a cosmic horde of demons... The ... controversy addresses what kind of activity stands behind...Jesus’ ministry. Instead of...God’s power at work in a cosmic struggle, the scribes envision Satan’s power at work.” [Elizabeth E. Shively, Op. cit., pp. 61-2]
- “Matthew’s ...Beelzebul [episode] is...a more elaborate picture of a kingdom of demons ruled by Satan places in strong antithesis to Jesus, the Spirit of God, & the Kingdom of God.” [Clinton Wahlen, Op. cit., p. 127]

d. The Satan: An Important Theme in Luke’s Gospel

- “The Satan [theme] is the most prevalent in Luke’s gospel especially in relation to the Kingdom of God...References to Satan...are so dominant that it is...one of the great hallmarks of the public ministry of Christ...[&] absolutely central to a comprehensive understanding of Luke’s gospel.”

[Marc Grenier, "Satan in the Kingdom of God," International Journal of Theology, Philosophy & Science, #12, p. 39]

- "Satan is behind every affliction by demons & illness, sometimes stated explicitly (as in the bent-over woman "bound by Satan" and the description of Jesus healing those oppressed by the devil; Luke 13:16...), but always implicitly held. Satan's authority is also maintained in explicit statements made by Jesus in Luke's Gospel. Satan's fall from heaven implies that he loses a role of authority he held at some point (Luke 10:18). The logic of Jesus' argument to refute the claim that he expels demons by the power of Beelzebul requires that Satan's kingdom is intact at that point (Luke 11:17–19). The strong man who is secure in his possessions, but defeated by the stronger man, refers to the devil who has authority in the world into which Jesus—the stronger one—arrives (Luke 11:21–22)." [Matthew S. Monnig, Satan in Lukan Narrative & Theology, Duke University (2019) pp. 94-95]

e. Satan's Kingdom (11:18)

- "If Satan...is divided...how will his kingdom stand? For you say I drive out demons by Beelzebul." (11:18)
- "There is only one NT reference where Satan and demons are mentioned together (Lk. 11:18)." – Michael Heiser
- "Luke 11:18...strongly implies that Satan has authority over the demons..." –Michael Heiser
- "Satan clearly has a kingdom. Because it makes no sense for a kingdom to be working against itself, Jesus asserts that he is on the side of God's kingdom...We see here that Satan's kingdom includes demons...and it is opposed to God's kingdom." [Jerome Wilczynski, "Misunderstood Satans of the Christian Bible," (Aug. 2016) p. 19]
- "The Beelzebul controversy contains the only explicit reference to Satan's kingdom in contrast to the kingdom of God." [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., p. 150]
- "The language of the 'kingdom of Satan' is a particularly important element of this teaching as it is the only direct reference in Luke (& together with the Matthean parallel, in all of the NT) to Satan having a kingdom, though there has been much that alludes to such a reality." [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., p. 153]
- "The fact that a kingdom is specifically ascribed to Satan shows that Luke...presuppose[s] a kingdom of Satan underlying his plot. Luke much more frequently speaks of the kingdom of God... The two kingdoms are not equal ...They are not equal powers... Satan's kingdom does not [prevail] against the kingdom of God ...While Satan rivals God & challenges his power & authority...Satan's kingdom will be defeated by the greater power of God, as seen in the power Jesus has over demons." [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., p. 154]
- "Luke...explicit[ly]...connects the expulsion of demons with the arrival of the kingdom of God, as Jesus says, "But if by the finger of God I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (11:20). This provides a narrative key for reading the events of Jesus' public ministry... Every time that Jesus expels demons, the kingdom of God advances, as the authority and rule of Satan is diminished." [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., pp. 154-5]
- "This passage [Luke 11:20] is important because it directly links exorcism to...the kingdom of God. Casting out demons is seen as proof that the kingdom of God has come... 'The exorcisms themselves are the coming of the kingdom' (Twelftree)." [Craig A. Evans, Op. cit., p. 68]
- "Mark takes Satan's reign a step further than the notion that Satan is in charge only over all of the demons. More than that...Jesus seems to assert that Satan's kingdom has captives, and that these captives are humans who suffer under Satan's tyrannical reign...The parable of the strong man...has 3 characters: the strong man (Satan), the one who binds the strong man & plunders his possessions (Jesus), and the possessions (humans)... In the...Beelzebul controversy, the people identified as the strong man's possessions are likely...those who are possessed by unclean spirits [& beyond that,] the captives of Satan's kingdom...likely include all those who are opposed to Jesus and His kingdom." [John P. Voigt, Op. cit., pp. 209-11]

f. Hierarchy in Satan's Kingdom

- The identification of Satan with Beelzebul as the prince of demons highlights several important concepts...That there is a ruler of the demons points to coordination and hierarchy...This also presents Jesus' encounters with demons as encounters with Satan himself. How this name

['Beelzebul'] came to be applied to Satan is something of a mystery. Nowhere else in 2nd Temple literature is this identification made." [Eric Futrell, Op. cit., p. 8]

- Key to Luke's "narrative is the recognition of Satan as the 'ruler of demons.' This image presupposes that demons serve an aim other than their own, that they are deployed by their lord [Satan] in the service of his purpose and as instruments of his dominion [kingdom]. This portrait... implies that an offensive [attack] against demonic activity is also an offensive against Satan." [Joel B. Green, Luke, p. 454]
- In the "Beelzebul controversy...there is a clear and explicit reference to a 'ruler' of demons in 11:15, & Satan is portrayed as having a "kingdom" in 11:18. It might not be a sophisticated hierarchy...but there is a demonic hierarchy all the same." [Katharine Perry, Op. cit., p. 190]
- Analyzing the Dead Sea Scrolls, Stuckenbruck distinguishes between "'lower-class [spiritual] beings' (i.e., "demon"; "spirit"; "angel") and 'chief demonic beings' (i.e., "Satan," "Mastema," "Belial [2 Cor. 6:15]," etc.)" [Ida Fröhlich (ed.) Evil & the Devil, pp. 56–69] Note: Belial (Gk. Beliar, also spelled Belial, from a Heb. term meaning "worthlessness" or possibly "destruction"). This name for Satan is not found elsewhere in the OT or NT but was used in the Judaism of Paul's day." [ESV]
- "The hostility [towards Jesus] means that the rule [kingdom] of God proclaimed and enacted by Jesus is not establishing itself without a struggle. The opposing rule [kingdom] of Satan is still very much around –something true for the time of Jesus' ministry, for the time when the gospel was written, & indeed for all time until the coming of the Son of Man to definitively establish the Kingdom (Mk. 13:24-27)." [Brendan Byrne, Costly Freedom, p. 79]
- For "the first time in [Luke] ...the demons' allegiance to Satan is denoted." [Chakrita M. Saulina, Narrative Function of Evil Spirits in...Luke, University of Cambridge, UK (2021) p. 118]
- In Luke, "Satan is linked more closely with the demons than in the other Gospels." [Clinton Wahlen, Jesus & the Impurity of Spirits..., p. 174]
- "Whether demons, spirits or principalities, they are all subordinate to Satan [ruler of demons] and manifest his power. The numerous powers all derive from one fundamental power...called 'Satan'... [He] exercises dominion through a vast organization of other spiritual beings." [John Robb, "Satan's Tactics in...His Kingdom of Darkness," International Journal of Frontier Missions, Vol. 10:4 (1993) p. 176]

g. Clash of Kingdoms: The Kingdom of God vs. Kingdom of Satan

- "In Mark...the kingdom of God & the kingdom of Satan were engaged in a war for authority & power over the creation. Jesus...is commissioned to eliminate Satan's minions, the unclean/demonic spirits...to prove that Satan can never win God's creation over to his purposes. [Meanwhile,] Satan seeks to maintain control of God's creation." [Cheryl S. Pero, Demonic possession & exorcism in...Mark, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (2010) p. 4]
- Jesus "takes the battle to Satan. Jesus is the strong[er] man who binds Satan & sets his captives free. Every healing, exorcism, cleansing, & recovery of lost people is a direct strike at Satan & his evil empire. When a sinner repents & turns to Jesus, Satan loses." [William P. Payne, Satan Exposed, p.]
- "Every aspect of Jesus' life can be understood as part of his battle against & victory over, the powers of darkness. Every one of Jesus' healings and deliverances... should be viewed as an act of war that advances God's kingdom and diminishes Satan's kingdom." [Gregory A. Boyd, "Ground-Level Deliverance Model," in JK. Beilby (ed.) Understanding Spiritual Warfare: 4 Views, pp. 130-7]

h. Satan a Prince = 'Princes' in Daniel 10

- "Surprising[ly]...reference to Satan or to a 'chief' over the demons are very rare." –Clinton Wahlen, Op. cit., p. 87]
- "Relevant to understanding this being's ['Satan's] designation as a 'prince' (שׂר (is the use of this title for patron angels of nations (both good and bad) in Dan. 10:13, 20-21 & 12:1... This idea of national angels is rooted in the divine council concept —just as השׂטן is in Job and Zechariah. In the Theodotion Greek translation of Daniel, שׂר is rendered with ἀρχων [archon]—the word the Synoptic Evangelists use when describing Beelzebul (whom they identify with Satan) as 'ruler of the demons' (Mk. 3:22 par.)." [Thomas Farrar, "NT Satanology & Leading Suprahuman

Opponents in 2nd Temple Jewish Literature,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 70, #1 (April 2019) p.]

- “The NT writers...witness to a consolidation of ‘Satan’ ...terminology. This process features prominently in the Synoptic Gospels’ Beelzebul controversy, where Jesus shares his opponents’ belief in a ‘prince of demons’ but discards their preferred designation ‘Beelzebul’ in favor of [the Satan] (Mk. 3:22-30; Mt. 12:24-32; Lk. 11:15-22). This consolidating tendency may even go back to the historical Jesus, since the Beelzebul pericope is widely regarded as historically accurate.” [Thomas Farrar, *Op. cit.*, p.]
- “The only verse in the Bible that mentions Satan & demons together is Luke 11:18: ‘If Satan...is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say I drive out demons by Beelzebul.’” –Dennis Linscomb

5. Jesus Refutes the Accusation: A

a. Jesus’ Rebuttal

- “Jesus has come not to collude with Satan but rather to confront & dispossess him.” –RT. France
- “The issue at play with the comparisons drawn by Jesus is that the exorcism of the evil spirit would be in direct conflict with the interests of the ‘ruler of the demons;’ thus he cannot be casting out the spirits via the power of Beelzebul.” [Archie T. Wright, *Satan & the Problem of Evil*, p. 152]
- The Synoptic Gospels “each record the accusation against Jesus that ‘he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebul, ‘the prince/ruler of the demons;’ Mark 3:30 adding that Jesus was accused of ‘having an unclean spirit,’ [They (scribes from Jerusalem) were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.” (Mk. 3:30)] the present tense... [‘having’] indicating a continuous presence of the demonic force in association with Jesus. More importantly, Beelzebul is...associated with Satan by each of the writers, indicating the malevolent nature of the indictment against Jesus; he is accused of being empowered by the arch-enemy of God...” [Keith Warrington, *Miracles in the Gospels*, p. 160]
- In Mark’s account “The scribes and Pharisees...who ‘came down from Jerusalem’ have challenged Jesus’ healing[s]...accused him of blasphemy... [&] begun conspiring to destroy him. Now they bring an even more serious charge (...the combination of apostasy & subversion by conspiring with the enemy) ‘He has (is possessed by) Beelzebul’ & ‘he is casting out [demons] by the ruler of the [demons]’. Judging by Jesus’ restatement of the (second) charge, they view Satan as the ruler of the [demons]... Jesus repeatedly challenges their views...Only in the scribal charge of Beelzebul does Satan appear as ‘the ruler of [demons]’.” [RA. Horsley, *Empowering the People*, p. 281]
- Lk. 11:19 “Exorcism was an accepted practice in Jewish circles. Jesus assumes that those other exorcists operated by the power of God... In Lk. 9:49-50 Jesus also implicitly approved the use of his own name by an exorcist outside the disciple group.” [RT. France, *Luke*, p.]
- “The charge in Mk. 3:30 is parallel to that in Mk. 3:22 indicating that Beelzebul is an unclean spirit. In sum, the charge is that Beelzebul, the chief unclean spirit, indwells & empowers Jesus to perform his exorcisms.” [Elizabeth E. Shively, *Apocalyptic Imagination in...Mark 3:22-30*, p. 59]
- “In Matthew [& Luke], the Beelzebul controversy...represent[s] an intensification of Jesus’ conflict with Israel’s religious hierarchy...It is impossible to see the religious leaders as honest sceptics because Jesus has performed too many spectacular miracles.” [Clinton Wahlen, *Op. cit.*, p. 124] • “Matthew’s version of the Beelzebul controversy is the clearest...depicting a ‘kingdom’ of demons headed by Satan (Mt. 12:26) –a kingdom which is suffering defeat by the Spirit at work in Jesus (Mt. 12:28) ...Jesus announces the bringing in of God’s [end-time] salvation through the overthrow of Satan’s kingdom.” [C. Wahlen, *Op. cit.*, p. 126]

b. Jesus’ Parable of the Divided Kingdom

- “Jesus’ refutation [of the accusation] employs...a logical argument. Although [it] omits several...steps ... It’s [possible] to reconstruct most of them:
 - a. “If Jesus casts out demons by means of Beelzebul/Satan, as his opponents charge, then Satan’s kingdom has become divided.
 - b. A divided Satanic kingdom implies a Satanic kingdom laid waste, & one that cannot stand [it collapses].
 - c. ??? [Satan’s kingdom hasn’t been laid waste; it’s not about to fall...]
 - d. Therefore, Satan’s kingdom has not become divided [It’s not collapsed/imploded].
 - e. Jesus, then, does not cast out demons by means of Beelzebul/Satan: QED.”

- What is the missing line of the argument? [Line 3].” [Joel Marcus, Op. cit., p. 248]
- “If Satan opposes himself & is divided, he cannot stand but is finished.” (Mk. 3:26 CSB)
- “If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? ...” (Lk. 11:18a CSB)
- “Jesus’ point is that the internal division postulated in Mk. 3:26a = Lk. 11:18a cannot have happened, [point 4 above] because if it had...the fatal weakening of Satan’s kingdom would have transpired – which is patently not the case [at that point].” [Joel Marcus, Op. cit., p. 248]
- “Jesus replied to the charge of collusion with Satan by pointing out the lack of logic in the accusation. Why would Satan cast out Satan? If his house or kingdom is divided, then he surely is coming to an end (Mk. 3:23–26...). Jesus’ remarkable success is possible only if the “strong man” (i.e., Satan) has been bound by one who is stronger (i.e., Jesus). When bound, the strong man’s goods can be plundered (Mk. 3:27), that is, Jesus can rescue those taken captive by Satan.” [Craig Evans, Op. cit., p. 11]

6. “By the finger of God...I cast out demons” –Jesus (Lk. 11:20)

a. “By the finger of God” –Jesus’ unique phrase

- “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt. 12:28 CSB)
- “Jesus’ amazing power over demons was due to the power of the Holy Spirit working through him.” [ESV]
- “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Lk. 11:20)
- “A key...[to]the underlying dynamic of Luke’s plot [is]: “If...by the finger of God I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is come upon you” (11:20). [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., p. 150]
- “In Lk. 11:20...[we] see the clearest connection between exorcism... [and] the kingdom of God.” –Edgar Rac
- “Luke 11:20 strongly suggests that [Jesus] was battling not only individual demonic spirits, but the satanic agenda on a more cosmic scale, which involved the warfare of two kingdoms.” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., p. 96]
- “The 2nd point that supports the authenticity of the passage is seen in the unusual diction that Jesus has employed: “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons...” (Lk. 11:20). The language is so odd that even Matthew, writing for a primarily Jewish audience, well versed in Scripture & synagogue, changes the saying to read: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons...” (Matt 12:28). Although it is debated, most commentators regard Luke’s wording as original & Matthew’s wording as redactional. If Luke’s “by the finger of God” is original, it almost certainly alludes to the confession of Pharaoh’s magicians, with respect to the works of power God performed through Moses & Aaron: “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19). The magicians could imitate some of the mighty deeds of Moses & Aaron, but not all. They truthfully informed Pharaoh that what Moses & Aaron were doing could only come from God, not from magic or trickery. In later Jewish tradition... Pharaoh’s magicians are identified as Jannes & Jambres [2 Tim. 3:8], who were raised up by Satan & whose works of power were aided through witchcraft & “angels of destruction” (i.e., demons). The allusion to Ex. 8:19 & the interpretive tradition that developed alongside it regarding the Satanic orientation of Pharaoh’s magicians makes Jesus’ deeds all the more impressive. If he is not in fact in league with Satan (as were Pharaoh’s magicians, who opposed Moses & Aaron & accordingly opposed Israel’s liberation), then he may rightly claim that his mighty deeds are “by the finger of God” & by no other power. Jesus’ claim is extraordinary ...Jesus is suggesting that through his ministry, especially seen in the exorcisms, God is effecting a new deliverance of Israel.” [Craig A. Evans, “Jesus & the Spirits,” pp 12-13]

b. Allusion to Moses vs. the Egyptian Magicians (Ex. 8:18-19)

- “The magicians [of Egypt] tried to produce gnats using their occult practices, but they could not. The gnats remained on people and animals. 19 “This is the finger of God,” the magicians said to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh’s heart was hard, & he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.” (Exo. 8:18-19 CSB)
- “Up to this point the magicians of Egypt had been able to use their secret arts [‘occult practices’] to replicate the signs done by Aaron. In each case they had been unable to overpower the sign (the serpents) or reverse its effects (water to blood; frogs on the land). But now that they are unable to produce gnats from dust, [so,] they say to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19). The narrative of the plagues highlights...that some of Pharaoh’s servants...begin to recognize what he fails to see: the God who sent Moses & Aaron...has power over Egypt...” [ESV]

- “Luke’s use of ‘the finger of God’ most likely refers to Ex. 8:19, which says: ‘Then the magicians said to Pharaoh: “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, & he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.’ ...The connection between Luke 11:20 & Ex. 8:19 lies in the contexts of both episodes, which involve the hardness of hearts, and true and false miracle workers (those who performed miracles through God’s power, and those who performed through the demons’)...Thus Jesus’ statement in Luke 11:20 strongly...suggests that he was battling not only individual demonic spirits, but the satanic agenda on a more cosmic scale, which involved the warfare of two kingdoms.” [Edgar Rac, ‘Thy Kingdom Come.’ ...Exorcisms in...Luke,” University of Glasgow, UK (2021) pp. 96-97]
- “This suggests that Jesus appealed to the famous contest between Moses & the magicians of Pharaoh. Jesus asserts that he casts out demons ‘by the finger of God,’ not ‘by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.’ This...may ...[be] typological...implying that the power of God at work in Jesus’ ministry [matches] ...the power of God at work in the great deliverance [with Moses] from Egypt long ago. Just as God dismantled the kingly authority of Pharaoh & his gods (or demons) & transferred his people under his [God’s] own authority, so now in Jesus’ ministry Satan’s kingdom is being dismantled, & Israel is being invited to embrace divine rule [God’s kingdom].” [Craig A. Evans, ‘Inaugurating the Kingdom of God & Defeating the Kingdom of Satan.’ BBR., Vol. 15.1 (2005) pp. 71-72] • “Luke stresses...the stark contrast...between the Egyptian magicians who were able to recognize YHWH’s act through Moses, and [Jesus’ opponents], who could not recognize God’s work through Jesus.” [CM. Saulina, Op. cit., p. 121]

7. Jesus’ ‘Strong Man’ Parable (Mk. 3:27/Mt. 12:29 Vs. Lk. 11:20-22)

– “But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.” (Mk. 3:27 CSB)

– “How can someone enter a strong man’s house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.” (Mt. 12:29 CSB)

“If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his estate, his possessions are secure. 22 But when one stronger than he attacks and overpowers him, he takes from him all his weapons he trusted in, and divides up his plunder.” (Lk. 11:20-22 CSB)

a. ‘Strong Man’ Parable: Jesus is the ‘Stronger One,’ conquering, disarming Satan

- Jesus “view[ed] himself as an effective opponent of Satan, [as the even] ‘Stronger One whose exorcisms testified to his role as the ‘spearhead’ of the inbreaking age of God’s dominion [kingdom as] ...reflected in Mk. 3:27 = Lk. 11:20- 22.” [Joel Marcus, Op. cit., p. 266]

b. ‘Strong Man’ Parable in Luke VS. Mark & Matt.

- a. “No one can enter a strong man’s house & plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. [Implied he’s stronger]. Then he can plunder his house.” (Mk. 3:27 CSB)
- b. “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man [Satan], fully armed, guards his estate, his possessions are secure. 22 But when one stronger than he [Jesus] attacks & overpowers him, he [disarms] him...& divides up his plunder.” (Lk. 11:20-22)
- c. “Luke...establishes that Satan’s power is to be defeated by Jesus & not by internal conflict, by means of a parable about a strong man & a stronger one...Luke clarifies the story by identifying the person that Mark & Matthew speak of only indefinitely by calling him ‘the stronger one’...(Luke 11:22). Luke thus identifies two subjects, the strong one and a stronger one, who are in conflict with each other...the strong man is Satan and the stronger one is Jesus.” [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., p. 156]
- d. “Satan’s kingdom has captives...these captives are humans who suffer under Satan’s tyrannical reign...The parable of the strong man...has 3 characters: the strong man (Satan), the one who binds the strong man & plunders his possessions (Jesus), & the possessions (humans)... In the...Beelzebul controversy, the people identified as the strong man’s possessions are likely...those who are possessed by unclean spirits [& beyond that,] the captives of Satan’s kingdom...likely include all those who are opposed to Jesus and His kingdom.” [John P. Voigt, Op. cit., pp. 209-11]

c. Luke modifies Matthew’s version of the Parable (Lk. 11:21-22)

- “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace [estate], his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him & overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.” (11:21-22)
- “Matthew & Luke present very different versions of the parable of the Strong Man... Luke radically [modified] the [common source] Q text of the Strong Man. A key phrase drives Luke’s redaction... ‘(the armor) on which he relied [trusted]’ (11:22) ...Luke...substitutes ‘conquering’ [‘overcomes’] for ‘binding’

...[He] wants a strong contrast so he creates 11:21 to portray the strong man at peace ['safe'] before the stronger one enters... [Meanwhile,] Matthew took over the parable of the Strong Man unchanged from Q." [Harry T. Fleddermann, Q: Reconstruction, pp. 485-8]

d. Luke's Version is more Militaristic

- "Matthew & Mark record Jesus as saying...one must 'first bind to strong man.' Luke...uses much stronger language. The strong man is 'fully armed', 'guarding' his 'courtyard' or 'palace.' The... 'one stronger' ... 'assails' ['attacks'] and 'conquers' him... This more graphic & descriptive account [is] Luke's... conception of...the struggle between Satan & the Son of God... Luke...gives us a developed view of Satan & of the conflict between Satan & Jesus." [Robert D. Wisner, Authority of Satan, McGill University (1990) pp. 47-48, 59]
- "Although the main focus of the parable is Jesus' exorcism, the strong militaristic imagery suggests that Luke is consciously associating the conflict between God/Jesus and Satan with the military and political context of his narrative." [Katharine Perry, Op. cit., p. 267]
- "Luke revises...the description of the strong man to highlight the military language & heighten the sense of armed conflict. The strong man is... 'fully armed'...a description not found in the parallel accounts [e.g. Matt.]. The word [has] a military sense... Luke says that the strong man "guards his own palace [estate]" (11:21), which also lends an element of conflict, as the verb [suggests] a military watch to protect one's property or camp...Luke describes the man's property as an ['estate']...a grander, more regal property, a "palace." Luke...makes him...a powerful man, not a householder, but "a lord of a castle." Luke also changes...the stronger one's actions to increase the stakes...Rather than "binding" as in Matthew & Mark, in Luke the stronger one [i.e., Jesus] attacks & conquers him... Luke instead says that Satan is assailed & conquered...the power of God will defeat the power of Satan...The defeat of the strong one is described [as]...being despoiled [disarmed] of his military gear...Jesus is the stronger one who has come to attack & conquer the strong man & take away the armor in which he trusted...A real war is being fought between Jesus & the Satan, as the heads of the forces of good and evil." [Matthew S. Monnig, Op. cit., pp. 157-9]

e. Luke 'transposes' Matthew's & Mark's Parable to a 'Cosmic Key'

- "Using the parable of the strong man, Jesus explains the...cosmic war between God's & Satan's kingdoms... In Luke, we find a scene of a cosmic war between two kingdoms, and the successful exorcism is only a smaller part of this reality." [Chakrita M. Saulina, Op. cit., pp. 120, 123]
- "The parable...shows that this cosmic struggle is the point and that the miracles provide evidence for Satan's defeat ...Here is the ultimate cosmic war. Jesus & Satan stand toe-to-toe in battle. The miracles are an 'audiovisual' that Satan's cause is ultimately lost." [Darrell L. Bock, Luke, p. 211]

f. Applications to Christians Today?

a. No Neutrality; No 'sitting on the fence' (Lk. 11:23)

- "Anyone who is not with me is against me, & anyone who does not gather with me scatters." (Luke 11:23)
- "In this cosmic war, Jesus...urges the crowd to take their stand. There is no middle ground or neutral position in this battle (Luke 10:23)." [Chakrita M. Saulina, Op. cit., p. 123]
- "In the warfare passage examined in Luke 11; Jesus concluded in 11:23 that 'he who is not with Him is against Him & he who does not gather with Him scatters.' There is no neutrality...in the matter of spiritual warfare. You are either fighting against evil or against righteousness, fighting for God's kingdom or against His kingdom. One must ...take side." [Ezekiel A. Ajibade, "Kingdom of God & Spiritual Warfare," 2007 Conf. of Theolog. Education, p. 10]
- "There are no 'Switzerlands' [famous for its neutrality] in this cosmic war [Lk. 11:23]. Jesus says that neutrality to Him is opposition to Him. To decide for God, one must decide for Jesus. In a cosmic war there are no spectators; everyone lines up on one side or the other...[So,] be careful which side you choose." [Darrell Bock, Luke, p. 211]

b. No Example of Christians Casting Down Territorial Spirits ('Princes')

- "Satan & demons are clearly presented over against Christ, his mission, & kingdom...[But,] a serious problem with charismatic spiritual warfare teachings is that they give too much attention to Satan and the demonic hierarchy ...According to Scripture, Satan rules over a demonic chain of command that tries to control territories on earth... [the 'princes' of] (Dan. 10:13, 20-21). But the Bible does not reveal that believers have the power to dispel these evil spirits from their geographic domains... Christians have the authority to cast out evil spirits [demons] (Lk. 10:17- 19 [etc.]) & they can resist the devil from taking over control of their lives (Jam. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). However, [we] do not see an example of God's people pulling down the [territorial, 'princes']

evil spirits over cities and nations.” [Opoku Onyinah, “Spiritual Warfare,” W. Vondey (ed.) Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology (2020) p.]

c. Christians do Not Attack the Devil (Satan)

- We “can affirm that Christians do not fight with the devil; their armor for protection against the enemy is based on what God has done in Christ...Therefore, the warfare concept needs to be considered as the primarily mystical conflict between God and satanic powers, in which the human being is both passively & actively involved.” [Opoku Onyinah, Op. cit., p.]

d. OT Daniel is a Pattern of Prayer

- We note that “Daniel did not engage in aggressive [‘warfare’] prayer against such powers [the ‘princes’ of Persia & Greece] with the expectation of “binding” or “evicting” them. The prophet [Daniel] did not pray against cosmic powers, but for the people of God & the fulfillment of God’s redemptive purposes (cf. Eph. 6:18–20). Apparently, Daniel’s focus in prayer was not on the celestial [strategic level,] warfare in the heavenlies, but on the promises of God (Dan. 10:12; cf. Jer. 25:11; 29:10) & their fulfillment on the terrestrial [earthly] scene.” [David E. Stevens, “Daniel 10 & the Notion of Territorial Spirits,” Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 157, #628 (2000) p. 430]

8. Jesus’ Parable of the Unclean Spirit’s Return (Lk. 11:24-26)

– 24 “When an unclean spirit [referring to an evil spirit (demon)] comes out of a person, it roams through waterless places looking for rest, and not finding rest, it then says, ‘I’ll go back to my house that I came from.’ 25 Returning, it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that person’s last condition is worse than the first.” (Lk. 11:24-26 CSB)

– Here “we see a metaphorical usage of the ‘house’, which has a twofold meaning: the nation of Israel, and an [individual] person’s soul.” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., p. 104]

a. ‘House’ signifying Israel as a Nation (Matt. 12:45)

- The spirit “goes & brings with it 7 other spirits more evil than itself, & they enter & settle down there. As a result, that person’s last condition is worse than the first. That’s how it will...be with this evil generation.” (Mt. 12:45)
- “Jesus travel[led] from town to town, proclaiming the Good News & offering a spiritual cleansing to...the people of Israel... In most cases...the restoration, which was meant to be preparatory, had stopped short, leaving Israel’s house ‘empty’...Matthew’s wording ...includes (whereas Luke omits) the phrase: ‘So also will it be with this evil generation’ (Mt. 12:45). Race or generation (Gk. γενεά) undoubtedly refers to the Jewish nation.” [E. Rac, Op. cit., pp. 104-5]
- “Viewing the text in a larger context, we can remember Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. In Ex. 12:12 we read: ‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, & I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man & beast; & on all the gods of Egypt I will execute my judgments: I am the Lord’... The notion of other gods, other Elohim...in Ex. 12:12 are the supernatural beings [national, ‘gods of the nations’] who were not meant to be worshipped.” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., pp. 106-7]
- “In Lk. 11:24-26...[Israel] had a choice to make: whether to accept Jesus & fill their ‘houses’ with Yahweh’s presence & Spirit, or suffer the condition which was worse than the first. As Heiser correctly observes, ‘The spiritual war brought on by the inauguration of the kingdom of God offers no neutrality.’ Thus Luke, just as Moses, calls the liberated & healed people to serve the kingdom of Yahweh, and follow only Him...[Israel’s] acceptance of the Messiah & his kingdom would’ve... [meant] liberation & salvation both from individual demonic possessions, & Satanic rulership over the nation.” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., pp. 107-8]

b. Matthew’s interpretation — “the story is a parable about Israel” — Dale Allison

- In “Mt 12:43-45, [this saying] is about Jesus’ relationship to ‘this generation. The narrative of an unclean spirit that leaves or is forced to leave someone, only to return later with seven other spirits more evil than itself in order to occupy the ‘empty’ person again, represents [Israel’s] national condition: the people are tragically more miserable after the Messiah’s advent than before it...While some in Israel have embraced the Messiah, Israel as a corporate entity has not...The[ir] failure to respond rightly to ‘the deeds of the Messiah’ (11:2) is in Matthew’s eyes unequalled evil, & the last state has become worse than the first.” [Dale C. Allison, “Returning Spirit, Q 11:24-26: Multiple Meanings,” in Jesus Tradition in Q, pp. 120-1]

c. ‘House’ signifying the Individual – Problem of Returning spirit(s) (Lk. 11:20)

- The parable is a “warning that deliverance without subsequent filling leads to worse condition.” [Green, Lk., p. 456]
- A “spiritual vacuum is not a neutral state but a dangerous one—a condition that naturally tends toward worse occupation rather than simply persisting unchanged.” [JR. Edwards, Luke, p. 342]
- “The warning is clear: exorcism without positive spiritual engagement leaves the person worse off. Jesus’ ministry ...cast out demons but [also] call[ed] to discipleship—filling the house.” [G. Twelftree, In the name of Jesus, p. 183]
- “There’s no doubt that in Gospel accounts Jewish exorcists were casting out demons by the power of Yahweh... In Luke 11:24...we read of the spirit departing from the house...[However,] ‘the problem of spirits’ returning lies not in the exorcistic technique, but in the absence of further means of prevention’ (Stuckenbruck). ‘While [the Jewish exorcists] drove out unclean spirits in certain cases (Lk. 11:19), they unfortunately did nothing to prevent them from returning and causing an even worse state of affairs (Lk. 11:24–26)’ (Klutz).” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., pp. 108-9]

d. More than a One-time Deliverance is Needed

- “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Lk. 10:20)
- The Problem: “An exorcism was purposeless unless it offered an alternative & a liberation which was more than a one-time miracle...The key to the problem is not the success or failure of the casting out of demons, but...the failure to [fully] ‘respond to God’s work,’ which leaves the demonized in an even worse position than before... Refer[ring] back to Lk. 10:20...Jesus specifically instructs his disciples not to rejoice because of the departure of demons, but rather, because their names are written in heaven, & that they belong to the kingdom of [God]...Exorcism was not about casting out a demon in particular, but about repenting, accepting God’s rule, and filling the ‘swept’ and cleansed lives and ‘houses’ with obedience and service to Yahweh alone.” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., pp. 110-1]
- “In spiritual warfare, neutrality...is impossible. In the battle between Christ and Satan...people’s choice was vital ...especially after they had been personally liberated from the demonic oppression. It is a mistake ...to see an exorcism as a one-time act of liberation. On the contrary, it was a daily, ongoing spiritual warfare between two kingdoms & two rulers...In Lk. 11:24-26 Jesus emphasizes more the filling of the house with Yahweh’s Spirit than the emptying of it ...‘Our empty, swept, tidy houses will be filled sooner or later by something, because houses are for occupancy’ (Bruner)... Jesus’ ‘thought that the destruction of Satan’s kingdom in an individual was only part of the ministry of exorcism,’...‘there needed to follow the coming of the Holy Spirit to the individual’s life...The key to...[the] exorcisms of Jesus was not the departure of evil spirits, but the...acceptance of the Holy Spirit in one’s ‘house’... Jesus’ exorcisms...were a call not only to be liberated, but also to join God’s kingdom, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and follow Jesus by being God’s people and His representatives.” [Edgar Rac, Op. cit., pp. 112-3, 115]
- “Temporary repentances, including personal moralistic endeavors or vain attempts at societal improvement, may discourage demonic forces for a time. But in the end, such measures will only backfire. The only means by which the kingdom [of God] will come is through the exertions of Jesus.” [Nicholas Perrin, Luke, p. 220]
- “Jesus told a story in which, after an evil spirit leaves a “house” (i.e., a body or person), that house, although prepared for a guest (“swept & put in order”), remains empty, with the result that a relapse is possible. The lesson is that one is not conclusively rescued when demons leave. One must not just be rid of something, but also gain something else; the demons must be replaced by acceptance of Jesus or his proclamation. For demons can return & become even more infernal than before... ‘The expulsion of the demon & the restoration of the victim to his normal condition leaves things exactly as they were before the demon first took possession’ (Manson). Jesus did not believe that one could “maintain a neutral stance vis-a-vis God & Satan. To refuse to submit oneself wholeheartedly to [God] after an exorcism would necessarily involve lapsing back into the control of [Satan].” [Allison, Op. cit., pp. 129-30] 2

e. “My House” (11:24b): the Demon’s illegitimate Claim

- “The unclean spirit [i.e., demon] ... says, ‘I’ll go back [return] to my house that I came from’.” (Lk. 11:24)
- “Demons are persistent in seeking ownership of the person’s entire material & immaterial self.” [ESV]
- “It is quite possible that Luke sees [this case] as relating to the ‘sons’ of Jesus’ accusers who cast out demons (11:19). Whereas...other Jewish exorcists have some success in casting out demons, theirs is

[only] a temporary solution; for the [evil] spirit is able to return... Only if the cure comes through the power of Jesus will it last, for the purpose of the cure [exorcism] is not the cure itself, but...to bring the person into [God's] Kingdom." [Craig A. Evans, Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew-Luke, pp. 254-5]

f. A 'Vacant House' (& 'Vacant soul') is Vulnerable

- "...how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Lk. 11:13 CSB)
- "An indwelling power must be invited in. For Luke, this power may refer to the Holy Spirit; prior to the Beelzebul controversy, Jesus teaches the disciples to pray to the Father to send the Spirit (11:13). Therefore, the return of the unclean spirit may indicate the vulnerability of human beings and their defenselessness without Jesus and the kingdom of God's power, & their need for the Spirit. If they do not fully align themselves to God's kingdom and receive the Spirit, humans are just as vulnerable as an empty house that attracts an infiltration of an evil force." [Chakrita M. Saulina, Op. cit., p. 124]
- "Jesus' words are a warning against the dangers of superficial moralism... It is not enough to drive out the unclean spirits: one must also fill the 'house' with a sustaining power that will prevent future demonic infestations from occurring. Such power [is] the power of the [Holy] Spirit." [Nicholas Perrin, Luke, p. 219]

g. "Deliverance without Filling creates Vulnerability" –A Practical Problem

- "This problem matters because spiritual vulnerability is...an experiential reality affecting countless individuals seeking help from the Church. The 'empty house' is not an abstract metaphor but describes the condition of persons who have undertaken moral reformation—perhaps through addiction recovery programs, psychotherapy, or initial ...conversion—yet find themselves worse off than before because the 'house was swept' but not filled. Pastors encounter such persons regularly: the recovering addict whose sobriety is accompanied by increasing spiritual darkness, the convert whose initial enthusiasm gives way to spiritual [lethargy or] oppression, the believer whose neglected prayer life has opened doors to attacks that once would have been easily resisted...Understanding why vacuum creates vulnerability enables [a] targeted...response: filling the house rather than merely sweeping it clean. ... [It] emphasize[s] spiritual practices not merely as disciplines for growth but as protections against vulnerability. The distinction between the Spirit's...indwelling & experiential operation enables nuanced pastoral care that neither dismisses the reality of believer struggle nor undermines assurance of salvation...Understanding that deliverance without subsequent filling creates conditions for worse re-infestation enables ministry approaches that emphasize not merely casting out but filling up." [Laszlo Pokorny, Spiritual Emptiness & the Trajectory of Evil: A Biblical Theological Analysis of Spiritual Vacuum, Depart. of Christian Theology, ICL Institute, NJ, USA (2026) pp. 30, 36]

h. Avoiding a 'Spiritual Vacuum'

- "Scripture's teaching [is] that the Holy Spirit's indwelling provides protection ("He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world," 1 John 4:4), that Spirit-filling is commanded as continuous action ("Be being filled with the Spirit," Eph. 5:18, present passive imperative), and that human sin can affect the Spirit's experiential operation. The [spiritual] principle that the 'filled house' is protected while the 'empty house' is vulnerable provides theological foundation for [our] understanding [& our taking protective measures] ..." [Laszlo Pokorny, Op. cit., p. 41]

i. Persistent Sin creates a Spiritual Vacuum

- "Scripture's teaching [is] that sin is progressive (James 1:14-15), that persistent sin creates hardening (Rom. 1:18- 32; Heb. 3:13), and that sin provides ground or foothold for demonic [influence] (Eph. 4:27). The ...principle that sin progressively creates vacuum conditions explains how human choices—through sin's cumulative effects— generate the spiritual emptiness. [The progression is] sin creates vacuum, vacuum diminishes protection, diminished protection enables escalating [evil] influences." [Laszlo Pokorny, Op. cit., p. 41]

j. A 'Spiritual Vacuum' is Dangerous; take Preventative Measures

- Don't Grieve or Quench the Spirit, but be Filled with the Holy Spirit
- Engage in Protective Spiritual Practices –Read & Study God's Word; Sing, Pray & Praise; Gather with Christians
- Monitor your "Spiritual Health," watch for developing patterns of sin, spiritual indifference/complacency, etc.
- Take Up the Whole Armor of God (Eph. 6:13-18)

- “Spiritual vacuum’...refers to the condition of spiritual emptiness characterized by the absence of active divine indwelling, spiritual disciplines, and protective Christian community that creates conditions for escalating demonic influence. The concept emerges from Jesus’ parable of the empty house (Luke 11:24-26; Matt. 12:43-45), where the house that has been “swept & put in order” (moral reformation) but left “empty” (‘unoccupied,’) becomes vulnerable to [the unclean spirit’s] return and escalation. The spiritual vacuum is...[a] condition of dangerous emptiness that actively invites worse occupation. The concept integrates 3 dimensions... [1.] First...the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence & operative influence. While the Spirit’s [actual] indwelling in believers cannot be lost, the Spirit’s experiential operation—His empowerment, filling, & manifest activity—can be affected by human sin & neglect. Grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19) diminish the Spirit’s protective operation, creating [an] experiential vacuum even while fundamental indwelling persists. [2.] The 2nd... dimension concerns how sin progressively creates vacuum conditions. Persistent sin patterns harden the heart (Heb. 3:13), sear the conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), & create “foothold” (‘place’) for the devil (Eph. 4:27). The progression from will to lust to custom to necessity (Augustine) describes [sin’s effects on the] development of spiritual vacuum. [3.] Third, ...the absence of protective spiritual practices: prayer, Scripture engagement, worship, sacramental participation, & Christian community. These practices ‘fill the house’ with positive spiritual content; their absence leaves ‘the house empty.’” [Laszlo Pokorny, Op. cit., pp. 40-41]