

When it comes to the Spirit world, and the Spiritual Battle – the battle between:

- Light and Darkness;
- Good and Evil;
- Angels and Demons;
- God and Satan,,,

some are terrified; some are sceptical; and some become consumed by it – “Ohh, a spiritual battle – how exciting....”

The thing is, Satan is just as real as God is. And we rejoice, because The Kingdom of God is victorious – it **overthrows** Evil. God has not won an imaginary victory, over an imaginary enemy... It’s a very **real** victory, over a very **real** enemy.

And in the Bible reading today, there’s a lot going on.

There’s:

- demon possession;
- exorcisms (casting out of demons);
- miraculous healing (from an exorcism);
- signs & wonders;
- wandering Spirits...

And as Jesus was doing His thing (The Kingdom of God overthrowing evil), there were some who were amazed; there were some who were sceptical; and there were even some who accused Jesus of conducting a ‘false-flag operation’ – that He was on the side of evil...

And we’re going to talk about all of that,,, but the **focus** of this passage, and what we are to understand from it, is bracketed by V13 (on which we finished last week), and V28 (on which we finish this week)...

And those 2 verses, help us to understand what's between them, and it's something spectacular, that God has done.

When we finished up last week, Jesus had been teaching His Disciples about “prayer”. And He said: <sup>13</sup> **If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”**

Alright, to be given the Holy Spirit of God, is a Good Gift. What a wonderful blessing it is, that God chooses to live inside those whom He has saved... And so, in prayer, we ask/seek/knock, “Heavenly Father, Give to us / Fill us with, Your Holy Spirit.....”.....

Why? What's the benefit of the Holy Spirit of God? Why do we need Him?

It's because we are **not** a divided kingdom; We are **not** an empty residence; We are **not** merely hearers of the Word – we are **doers** of the Word. (which BTW is the end bracket [V28]). **“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”**

So, let's dig in.

There was a man who was mute (he couldn't speak). What causes that? For some

- there is a physical condition – there is some physical reason they cannot speak.
- it is a mental condition that prevents them from speaking.
- Sometimes, **God** makes a person mute. We've already seen that in this Gospel of Luke, when Zechariah was struck dumb because he didn't believe the Angel, when he was told that he was going to have a son (in his old age).

But when he named his son, "John" (who we know as John the Baptist), the Lord opened his mouth and gave him his words back;

- And here in V14, it's an evil spirit who makes the man mute.

Now, that does **not** mean that **every** person who cannot speak, is inflicted by an evil spirit. But in this case, it was an evil spirit that was the cause.

And so when Jesus cast the evil Spirit out, **the mute man spoke, and the people marvelled....** But not everyone, or at least not everyone marvelled in a good way... Some saw what Jesus had done, and accused Jesus of conducting a 'false-flag operation' – that He was **Beelzebul, the prince of demons** (or at least, doing it by the power of Beelzebul).

But then, others sat-on-the-fence – they were testing Jesus (tempting Him, looking for a sign). They wanted a sign from heaven (Don't know what – Maybe they wanted the sun and the moon to pause in their position in the sky for a whole day

{Like God did for Joshua<sup>i</sup>}; or maybe they wanted the sun to go dark {Like God did for Moses in Egypt<sup>ii</sup>} Or maybe they wanted a star to appear, like it did for the wise-men (don't know)... Jesus' spiritual victory over evil:– That wasn't enough for them....

...

So,,,,,  
in the eyes of Jesus, what's worse? Being dead against Jesus (thinking He's evil), or being un-decided/dis-believing – “Seeking a sign”....

Well, there is no middle ground. Skipping ahead to V23

**<sup>23</sup> Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.**

But we're getting ahead of ourselves (We'll get to that shortly)...

So, some saw the power of Jesus, and His **victory** over demons, and they judged Him “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,”

And Jesus said: **“Every kingdom divided against itself – It's had it – A divided household falls... <sup>18</sup> And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?”**

Alright, it's a battle of kingdom against kingdom. There are only 2 kingdoms: The Kingdom of God; and the Kingdom of this World (or Satan's kingdom – they are one and the same).

Why is this world so evil? It's because it's part of the Kingdom of Satan. ...

Those who receive Jesus – those who, in faith, believe in Him and bow to Him as Lord, They are citizens of the Kingdom of God. And those who do not, are part of the Kingdom of Darkness...

Now, apart from Jesus, can there be spiritual freedom, from the powers of darkness???

What do I mean by that??? Well, in lots of religions, there are:

- soothsayers;
- witchdoctors;
- priests;
- medicine men;
- guru's;
- mediums;
- shaman's;
- the indigenous have cleverman,,,

All, who through their dark arts, **offer** to set people free from evil spirits, and to give them spiritual healing....

Is there another way (other than Jesus), for there be spiritual freedom, from the powers of darkness?

**Never.** They themselves **are** the powers of darkness – They **are** false-flag operations, pretending to be the goodies, but in the long-run, the troubled (who engage their services) are pulled deeper and deeper into the bondage of evil.

You see, Satan doesn't do "good"/"Godly"/ "true freedom"... He might dress himself up to look like an angel of light, but he is not...

- his promises are **false**;
- his healing is **temporary** (and not real); and
- his illusion of freedom, is but another form of bondage.

No other god/religion/spiritual discipline, can truly set a person free.

**But**, when the Power of **God** sets us free (through the Lord Jesus Christ) – when the power of God sets us free from the Evil One, **we are free indeed**.

You know, exorcising demons from those who are oppressed, wasn't a new thing in Israel (The Jewish priesthood did it too<sup>iii</sup>). And Jesus said, "If I'm doing it by the power of the Devil, by what power are they doing it?"... And so they were judged by their own stance against Jesus... Their priesthood weren't doing it by the power of the evil one – they were doing it by the power of God

And so, in V20 we get to the crux of what's really going on... And this is spectacular: <sup>20</sup> **But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

If **Jesus** (who was not in the priesthood) was doing a mighty work of God, by defeating the kingdom of darkness, this is a sign of the Kingdom of God, breaking into the world, in a whole new way.

So:

When a person embraces evil, and gives the Devil a foot-hold, allowing an evil spirit to come in and oppress them, and possess them, how can they be set free of that???

Be under no illusions. Satan is strong – he is powerful...

And <sup>21</sup> **When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe;**

Sounds hopeless doesn't it??? When the Devil gets ahold of a person, how can they ever be set free??? (when he's fully armed/fully entrenched into their lives)... It sounds hopeless. Can they **ever** be set free???

**Yes**, they can... There is a glorious word in Scripture, and it is the word "**but**".

<sup>22</sup> **but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his spoil.**

What is the spoil/treasure of the Devil? What does he want, and to never lose??? He wants souls... The Devil knows that he's doomed to Hell, and he wants to take as many as he can with him.

But there **is** one who is stronger, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. And when Jesus steps in, He overcomes the evil one, and He takes his spoil/treasure. Jesus saves souls...

And so we come to V<sup>23</sup> **Whoever is not with me is against me,**

There is no neutrality/sitting on the fence/middle ground. If I am not with Jesus, I'm against Him... There's your answer right there, for anyone who says, "*I'm basically a good person. Why would God judge me, simply because I'm not following Him?*" Just tell them what Jesus said: <sup>23</sup> **Whoever is not with me is against me,**  
It's your call... With Jesus or against Him.

And **whoever does not gather with me scatters.**  
Alright, Jesus is making it clear, that to be part of the Kingdom of God, means to be actively participating in the Kingdom of God.

*Some of you work with sheep-dogs. Think of a time you've gotten a new pup, and the first time you took it to the sheep yards. Didn't it fill you with pride in your pup, when it's natural inclination, was to head off the sheep that were trying to make a break for it, and bring them back in the flock... It's amazing isn't it... That's what a good dog does – it gathers the flock... But then there's other dogs (hopefully other people's dogs), and their inclination, is to run into the flock and scatter them... Hmmm... I don't want that dog...*



**whoever does not gather with me scatters.** To be part of the Kingdom of God, means to be actively participating **in** the Kingdom of God, gathering souls for Jesus. And if we're **not** doing that, once again, there is no neutrality... *A working dog is either doing work, or it's getting in the way...* And Disciples of Jesus are active in building the Kingdom of God. Why? Because if we are **following** Jesus, we will be **gathering** with Jesus. Remember, the last verse (end bracket) says: **"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

Righto.

So, the Kingdom of God overthrows evil,,, And humans can be set free from the bondage of The Evil One,,, But to what end???

You see, the Kingdom of God is only the Kingdom of God, if the King is in residence... Alright, if the King is not present in your life, you're not part of the Kingdom of God.

If the one who is stronger (God), casts out the evil one, what then? Well, Jesus tells a story.

**<sup>24</sup> "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.'**

Do you notice that? It's still his house. No one else is living in it – it's his house.

Some folk long to be set free – they want to have spiritual freedom, and they'll look for spiritual freedom from Jesus, but they don't want Jesus... They want the spiritual work of Jesus, to:

- fix their marriage;
- heal their relationships;
- heal their disease;
- remove a painful past experience...

but they don't want to:

- be saved;
- be a Disciple of Jesus;
- be for Jesus; and
- gather with Jesus;

And so they don't:

- let Jesus into their heart;
- Ask;
- Seek;
- Knock;
- Pray, "Father, give to me the wonderful gift of Your Holy Spirit. Live inside of me – Make Your home in me."

And so, when the evil spirit returns, the stronger one who kicked him out, isn't there... God is not in residence.

it finds the house swept and put in order. <sup>26</sup> Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there.

What's the outcome of that? It can't be good. **And the last state of that person is worse than the first."**

You've seen this, haven't you? When a person seeks spiritual healing and release, and there **may be** an initial setting free/healing... but there's no serious ongoing submission or commitment to Christ. And so, it's not long, and you can tell, the King isn't in residence in their heart.

The:

- old ways return;
- addict returns to his addiction;
- criminal to his crime;
- adulterer to their immorality;
- foul-mouthed to their swearing;
- bitter return to their anger & rage; and
- abuser returns to his violence...

What Jesus is telling us here, is:

A person is worse off, to be set free, but not have God in residence... It's about a person who has experienced a great act of God, but not responded to Him by inviting Him in...

And hence the brackets: The prayer, Father, fill us with Your Holy Spirit... Come into my life; Take up residence; Be the stronger man in my life / strongest, who can never be overcome...

And getting fully on board – not just **hearing**, but **keeping** it / **doing** it / holding **onto** it / not just having a taste and giving it

up... **"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

That's what Jesus said, when some random woman in the crowd heard Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God (and the victory over evil), it's like "Oh wow – I wish my sons were like you – I wish you were my boy"... And she yells out: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts you sucked on when you were a little baby... (In other words, "How cool would it be, to be your mum")...

When it comes to Jesus and His teaching, it's common to hear "thought bubbles" popping up... Sometimes they're just downright wrong, and at other times, they're not so much "wrong", but they miss the point entirely.... And this is a case in point: The woman blurts out her thought-bubble, but she misses the point entirely. It's not about having some special personal connection to Jesus (like his mum); It's not even about hearing the teaching of God...

*My whole life's work, is about each week, preparing for each Sunday, to bring to you, the teaching of God. And you can hear it, and go home, saying, "What a wonderful sermon that was",,, or maybe you go home thinking "The preacher's lost the plot" ....*

*But either way, if you go home, unchanged/unmotivated – with no intention of putting into action, the word of God, or worse still, if you go home, uninspired to keep God's word,,,,, how sad is that....*

*Maybe the preacher's failed... Maybe the hearer's failed...*

Jesus exhibited a spiritual victory – the victory of the Kingdom of God, over evil... It is a sign that the Kingdom of God has come upon us... Some people go searching for more signs – we don't need more signs... Why would we pray, "Jesus, give us signs and wonders today"? Why would we seek that, when Jesus said, "That's what an evil and adulterous generation do?...."

We don't need more signs. The Kingdom of God has come upon you. When the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, that's the last sign we need.

The Kingdom of God has come upon us. What do we do about it? Keep it.

Those who:

- **reject** the work of God; Or
  - those who **reject** the word of God; or
  - look for more evidence, rather than joining Him
- don't keep the word of God...

Let's not be one of those.

The one who experiences spiritual release through the power of Jesus, is in grave danger of returning to bondage, unless they become more than listeners of God's word...

We keep God's word, and we pray, "Lord, be the strongest man in my life. Take up residence in my Heart, for I am Yours."

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus,  
You taught us to pray,  
"Your kingdom come".  
And our prayer today, is just that:  
May Your Kingdom come in each of our lives.

We yield ourselves to You;  
Come.  
Father, fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

Be the one who doesn't win a momentary, fleeting  
victory,  
But be the one who **rules**  
and reigns, victorious, in our lives.

And Lord, help us to be more  
than hearers of Your word.  
To be doers.  
To be keepers.  
To be **for** You – not against You;  
To **gather** with You – and not scatter...

For Your Kingdom has come,  
And we glorify Your Holy Name,

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Joshua 10:12-14

<sup>ii</sup> Exodus 10:21-23

<sup>iii</sup> Acts 19:13-16