



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## A Clash of Kingdoms (Luke 11:14-28)

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Early in Jesus ministry, many sought to make sense of what Jesus said and the things he did. As a result of these encounters one question often arose. "Who then is this Jesus?" Or in today's vernacular; "Who does he think he is?" As he set his face toward Jerusalem and his imminent death he asks a similar question to his disciples. "Who do you say that I am?" We have arrived at the point when the religious leaders have stopped asking the question, and have already made their determination, albeit a wrong one. In order that we do not make a similar mistake, we need to pause, and turning the question on its ear, ask it back to Jesus along with several others. Who do you say that you are? What did you think you were doing? And finally, post-resurrection, did you think you accomplished your purpose? These questions are important to have at the forefront of our thinking as we interact with the account of Jesus' life. As the diligent student quickly realizes, the purpose of school is not to give one all the answers, but to discover the right questions. In truth, all hangs on searching out the answers to these questions about Jesus. The doubts from his contemporaries arose because Jesus did not fit into their categories. He was not like the ordinary, shabby, second-rate kings to which they had become accustomed. Understanding his actions, and the claims he made about himself is an important component in discovering the true Jesus.

So what has Jesus been up to? He was just asked by one of his disciples to teach them how to pray. What follows is a section of Scripture that is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer. This prayer is not a loosely connected string of requests, but it is a prayer for those who are participating with Jesus in his kingdom agenda. It begins by addressing God as Father with its first petition that his kingdom would come. He then closes his teaching on prayer with an illustration about God as Father and his desire to give good gifts to his children. This idea of God as Father goes right back to the time when Israel was rescued from slavery in Egypt. When God spoke through Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and declared; "Israel is my firstborn," and; "let my people go!", by implication, God was saying he was their father. From then on, calling God as "Father" was to invoke the God of the Exodus. This good God who set the captives free, provided bread for them in the desert, forgiveness, and deliverance was the same God who would act again in history. As Jesus moves resolutely to Jerusalem, to act on God's behalf and restore his name which had been tarnished due to the rebellion of his people. He was on the way to accomplish another 'Exodus' in which the long-awaited kingdom of God would become a reality, where bread, forgiveness, and deliverance would be given to those who listen and obey the word of God as revealed through Jesus. As we pray to the Father for his kingdom to come, we must believe this truth. The Father gives his children the Holy Spirit, this good gift, to those who ask for him. In this teaching Jesus joins the coming of God's kingdom with the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of his children.

Into this setting Luke introduces us to an account in which brash charges are made against Jesus and his ministry. Jesus also makes some equally bold statements in his own right. Miraculous deeds were happening which could not be denied. Those opposed to him sought to discredit Jesus by making spurious charges as to his source of power. Others were not quite sure, they needed more evidence, more testing was necessary before they would give their allegiance. As opinions swirled around Jesus' ministry he left one thing perfectly clear, there were only two sides. The crowds and religious leaders may have sought to make sense of Jesus, his ministry, and his power. For Jesus, his work declared one thing, he was king and by extension the kingdom had come upon them. Satan had fallen like lightning, and the power of evil would ultimately be defeated by Jesus. The world's strong man was vanquished and Jesus would gain the decisive victory over Satan on the cross. All that remains is the side one chooses. The battle lines have been drawn, and God's kingdom can only be established by a final battle. The enemy troops will mass again, close in, and do their worst to repair the earlier damage. But in this moment Jesus will radically redefine kingship itself around his own work, his mission, and his fate.

*Luke 11:14-28 – (14) Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. (15) But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." (16) Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. (17) Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. (18) If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. (19) Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. (20) But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (21) "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. (22) But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils. (23) "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters. (24) "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' (25) When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. (26) Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first." (27) As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." (28) He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."*

### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS (SESSION WEEKS) AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING  
STAFF, LOBBYISTS & LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS (NON-SESSION WEEKS) AT 1:00PM, ROOM 322 MAIN CAPITOL

# *Pennsylvania*

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### A VARIED RESPONSE

*The crowd was amazed* - The reactions to Jesus driving out this mute demon are all over the map. The crowds were astounded at the working of Jesus' power and were always gathering around him. In one sense there was a party like atmosphere. You did not need to look far to discover the reason for the celebration. People were being healed of every disease throughout the whole of Galilee (Matthew 9:35). In these communities many suffered from long-term problems – for instance the mute who was unable to speak or the woman with a chronic hemorrhage. These bodily problems also caused a variety of social issues: the fractured relationships due to a limited ability to communicate or the “unclean” woman who could not share food with her family. This is what the announcing of the kingdom meant: "God was in charge now- and this is what his rule looks like!"

*By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons* – Others missed the celebration and only see Jesus as a tremendous threat. How did they draw the battle lines so wrong? Why do they jump to the conclusion that Jesus was in league with Satan and working for the dark side? Israel believed that their story was going somewhere. Roughly fifteen hundred years before the time of Jesus, Moses had delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, across the Red Sea, and through the desert to the promised land. The Jews lived on the hope that this would happen again. The tyrants would do their worst, and God would deliver them. Understanding the Exodus will go a long way in understanding a great deal of Judaism. In Jesus' day it was obvious that Rome had taken the role of Egypt. In their minds the long story of Israel must confront the long story of Rome. It was no time for someone to be confronting the religious establishment, or for that matter, driving out demons.

### THE KINGDOM IS UPON YOU

*But if I drive out demons by the finger of God* – Beelzebub was a nickname which originally meant something like “Lord of the Flies.” During Jesus's day it was a way to reference the personal source of evil without giving it a more precise definition. One explanation of what Jesus is doing is that he struck a bargain with the Prince of Demons. Jesus posits another explanation, and in so doing, he utilizes terminology that harkens back to the Exodus. When the magicians tried by their secret arts to reproduce the plague of the gnats they were unable to do so. They acknowledged to Pharaoh this plague was done, “by the finger of God” (Exodus 9:8). By doing things Jewish exorcists were unable to do only one conclusion remained; Jesus' work, like that of Moses, is done by the finger of God. It was God himself who validated Jesus' kingdom work. By extension, any accusation made against him or his work was a direct charge against the God they claimed to serve.

*Then the kingdom of God has come to you.* – In one sense the coming of the kingdom was a celebration for the “little children”, those who saw their desperate need for Jesus. On the other hand, for the “wise and understanding,” this truth remained hidden to them (Luke 10:21). Jesus' answer to their accusation shows remarkable perspective on what was going on, and what is really involved when God's kingdom comes on earth as in heaven. It is a clash of kingdoms, Satan has his kingdom, and God has his kingdom. This is why it is so easy to draw the battle lines wrong. Jesus is not fighting a battle that his contemporaries, including his own followers, had expected him to fight. This is what the Sermon on the Mount seems to reveal, fighting itself, in the normal physical sense, was precisely what he was not going to do. The battle itself was a different sort of thing, because it had a different sort of enemy.

### THE STRONG MAN DEFEATED

*But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him* – As Jesus healed and drove out demons his work spoke to the accomplishing of a great initial victory over Satan. Jesus has already “tied up” the strong man and he is plundering his house. Earlier he had spoken to the disciples of seeing Satan fall like lightning (Luke 10:18). This event took place at the beginning of Jesus' public career. During Jesus' forty day fast Satan tempted him, and tried to persuade him to grasp the right goal with the wrong means, and so bring him over to his side (Luke 4:6-7). Jesus won that battle over Satan, which is why he is able to announce the kingdom's arrival. While the battle was not over, the great initial victory created a space in which God's kingdom can now make inroads as Jesus sets about to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom for those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18).

### EXHAUSTING THE POWER OF EVIL

*Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself* – The house of Israel is being swept clean by Jesus. This however will not end the conflict. Darkness it seems, had to be allowed to do its worst in order for its power to be exhausted. Evil will once again marshal itself and in a final act of rebellion against the divine, will put Jesus on the cross, and continue its mocking questions to the very end. Somehow it appears that the battle with Satan, which was also a battle for the kingdom, climaxed in Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus is indeed fighting what he takes to be the battle against the real enemies of God's people, even though this was not the battle any expected him to fight. His royal task was redefined around his vision of where the true problem lies. In this the vocation of Israel's true king was redefined: to fight and win the key battle, by this he set his people free and established God's sovereign and saving rule, through his suffering and death.

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