

21. Light or darkness?

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Darkness is absence of light. There is literally nothing we can do in complete darkness other than sitting waiting to the end if we cannot have any method of light at all. Can you imagine that is what would be like in the total darkness of hell in addition to all the torments that go beyond anyone’s imagination and separation from God’s presence?

But God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all. Before anything existed, God was there – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We don’t know exactly when, but God created the angels during the time when He created everything in six literal days. Among the angels, there was Lucifer who once was an archangel according to the Book of Isaiah. He got jealous of God who was worshiped by the first man and woman and the rest of angels. He rebelled against God with 1/3 of the angels. They were cast down to the earth for their revolt.

Even though we have incredible microscopic cameras that allow scientist to see electrons, even though we have tremendous capability to see vast and unreachable galaxies through gigantic telescopes, we have no way to see the invisible world of spirits that is between heavenly angels and the fallen angels which are known as demons. We may never get a glimpse of this spiritual conflict, yet the battle does exist.

No other people have explained about the battles between heavenly angels and demonic forces and demons’ hideous nature more than Jesus Himself.

I don’t want to give credit to demonic forces for what they have not done, but there are plenty of things they do to humans to commit sins. Defeated at the Cross, the devil has only one recourse left in his losing battle – to drag as many people as he can down with him. He shuts people’s ears to the Gospel. He sabotages the church and undermines our testimonies about Jesus to non-believers. They are doing everything they can to hurt the loving heart of God for His people.

A. THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

To help us better understand this war, let’s gather some intelligence on the opposing forces – the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.

	The Kingdom of Light	The Kingdom of Darkness
Ultimate Authority	The Living God (God the Father)	The devil (satan, Lucifer, Son of the Morning, Angel of Light, Beelzebub)
Ultimate Destination	Heaven, the place of eternal bliss with God	Hell, the place of unending torment and everlasting punishment
Strategy	Redemption through the grace of the Cross	Deception through hidden, wicked schemes
Ultimate Outcome	Wins	Loses

We cannot fight against the demons in physical realm. Even in spiritual realm, we are no no match for any of the demons. But the Lord Jesus already won the war for us through His death and resurrection.

B. JESUS STRENGTHENED BY BEELZEBUB?

Luke 11:14-16 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. 15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 16 Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. Instead of rejoicing that God had sent a Redeemer, the religious leaders were rebelling against the truth of God's Word and seeking to discredit Christ's work and character by connecting Jesus with satan.

So who is this 'Beelzebub'? It is also rendered Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron that we find in 2 Kings 1. This name literally means "lord of flies." The Jews took this name of a heathen god and understood it in terms of the similar sounding Hebrew "Baalzebub" which means 'lord of dung.' They applied it to a prominent demon, perhaps to satan himself.

That reminds me this joke:

The new supermarket near my house has an automatic water mister to keep produce fresh. Just before it goes on, you hear the sound of thunder and the smell of fresh rain.

When you approach the milk cases, you hear cows mooing and witness the scent of fresh hay.

When you approach the egg case, you hear hens cluck and cackle and the air is filled with the pleasing aroma of bacon and eggs frying.

The veggie department features the sound of a gentle breeze and the smell of fresh buttered corn.

I don't buy toilet paper there any more.

What these people demanded to Jesus in v16 was a part of accusation. They were saying in effect, "If you are really working for God, prove it by giving us a sign from heaven, not just a miracle on earth." They were tempting Jesus who is God, which is a dangerous thing to do.

C. A CLARIFICATION BY JESUS

Luke 11:17-23 But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. 18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. 19 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 20 But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. 22 But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. 23 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Jesus answered their charges with three arguments.

1) Their accusation was illogical.

Why would satan fight against himself and divide his own kingdom? It is like Osama bin Laden sends out one of his Al-Qaeda terrorists to Sahuarita and Green Valley, then sends out another one to kill the first one. It doesn't make a sense at all.

2) Their charges were self-incriminating.

By what power were the Jews casting out demons? How do their works differ from Christ's works? On the contrary, Christ's miracles show that the kingdom of God is present, not the kingdom of satan.

3) Their argument clarified Him to be God.

If Jesus wasn't of Satan, then only one alternative remained. He must be of God. And if He cast out demons "by the finger of God," then God's kingdom was present as He had announced. What clearer sign of His Messiahship could the Jewish leaders want?

In the illustration Jesus makes in v21-22, satan is a strong man, but Jesus is the stronger one. This brings a very important point every human must deal with – which side you are going to be with? Satan who would give you damnation and hell as the final eternal destination and misery while you are on earth or Jesus who gives you hope, peace, love and eternal life in heaven, even though you may not be a popular one while you are alive on this earth?

I think that the choice is rather clear. But the majority of the humankind still chooses satan's nicely packaged deception like we all did before until Jesus got our hearts.

Let's read v23 one more time.

Luke 11:23 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

From what Jesus said in here, the choice we have to make is one or another, no neutral position in this spiritual war. If someone chooses to be neutral, not for God and not for satan, it is the same thing as saying, "No" to God.

No matter how some of you try to claim that you are a Christian, if you are not a born-again Christian which means a person received Jesus Christ into his or her heart as the Lord and Savior and believe that He died for your sins and rose again from the dead and believe that He is God, you are not a Christian. That means that you choose to be against God by your own decision.

I've heard that my teaching is too strong when it comes to salvation and some even say that they felt like I was shoving this down to their throats. I have no intention to force you to receive Jesus into your hearts if you are not a Christian, nor I can make it happen. But I am making it clear that you don't think yourself as a Christian when you are not according to the Bible we study.

D. THE DANGER OF NEUTRALITY

Luke 11:24-26 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Jesus illustrated the danger of neutrality by telling the story of the man and the demon. The man's body mentioned in this illustration was the demon's "house". For some unknown reason, the demonic tenant decided to leave his "house" and go elsewhere. The man's condition improved immediately, but the man did not invite God to come and dwell within. In other words, the man remained neutral. What

happened? The demon returned with seven other demons worse than himself, and the man's condition was far worse than before.

E. OBEDIENCE, MORE THAN JUST WORDS

Luke 11:27-28 And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" 28 But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Taking sides with Jesus means much more than saying the right things like the woman. She was certainly sincere, but that was not enough. We are really taking sides with Jesus Christ when we hear His Word and obey it.

F. SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO BE ON GOD'S SIDE

Luke 11:29-36 And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. 30 For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. 31 The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. 33 "No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. 34 The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. 35 Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. 36 If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light."

Actually the crowd didn't want a Savior, they wanted a miracle worker and stuntman. The people's demand for signs was only a smoke screen for their lack of faith like many Christians in America. Many of them want to hear feel good messages, fancy stage presentations and many church programs to fit their needs and serve their desires. In other words, their faith is shallow and immature.

Jesus knew what was in these Jewish people's hearts, He was not impressed by the big crowds even though the disciples were. In order to drive this point to the hearts of His disciples and the people around Him, He used three illustrations to show the seriousness of spiritual opportunities to be on God's side:

1) Jonah

The sign of Jonah is consist with death, burial and resurrection. Jonah was swallowed by a big fish, stayed in the stomach of the fish for three days and nights and was vomited out to preach repentance in Nineveh. It is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus that proves He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

2) Solomon

The emphasis here is on the wisdom of a king. The Queen of Sheba traveled many miles to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but here was the very Son of God in their midst, and the Jews would not believe His words. Even if Jesus had performed a sign, it would not have changed their hearts. They needed the living wisdom of God, but they were content with their stale religious tradition.

The important thing about these illustrations is that they involved Gentiles. When Jonah preached to the Gentiles in Nineveh, they repented and were spared. When a Gentile queen heard Solomon's wisdom, she marveled and believed. If, with all their privileges, the Jews did not repent, then the people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba would bear witness against them in the last judgment. The Lord gave Israel so many opportunities, yet they would not believe.

Let me bring this to our situation. Not like any other country around the world, since our founding fathers were staunch Christians and they included this freedom in our Constitution to worship our God freely. That freedom gives us the background to worship our God without fear of federal, state and local government's interference, not like what the liberal politicians and federal judges are trying to enforce.

In spite of such freedom, Americans shun God and they embrace evil and idols in their lives more and more. Just like God did to the Jews, He will allow America to take herself to the bottom until she looks toward heaven and repents. I hope and pray that we may have one last revival in America soon before the Lord Jesus comes and gets His people out of this world.

3) Light

The brightest sun cannot enable a blind man to see. There are many spiritually blind people around the world because they don't have Jesus in their hearts.

Three men in the Bible illustrate this truth. They began in the light and ended up in the darkness because they were double-minded. The name Samson probably means "sunny," yet he ended up a blind slave in a dark dungeon because he yielded to the "lust of the flesh". Lot began as a pilgrim with his godly uncle Abraham. He ended as a drunk in a cave, committing incest, because he yielded to "the lust of the eyes". King Saul began his reign as a humble leader but his pride led him to a witch's cave, and he died of suicide on the field of battle. His sin was "the pride of life". He would not humble himself and obey the will of God.

Each of us is controlled either by light or darkness. The frightening thing is that some people have so hardened themselves against the Lord that they cannot tell the difference. They think they are following the light when, in reality, they are following the darkness.

But when we trust Jesus Christ, our eyes are opened, the light shines in, and we become children of Light.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) If someone chooses to be neutral, not for God and not for Satan, it is the same thing as saying, "No" to God.

2) We are really taking sides with Jesus Christ when we hear His Word and obey it.

3) When we have the light of God's Word shining in us, when we see and understand the work of Jesus around us, we won't walk in the darkness of spiritual blindness.