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## **Clear Signs or Clear Eyes? – Luke 11:14-36**

**Introduction** – Since the Garden, there has always been the struggle of the two kingdoms. God gave the Word to be believed in order that Adam and Eve might see how to live. The serpent questioned God's methods of coming to knowledge and offered a counter-word, "you won't die." Satan is constantly suggesting that we ought to come to the knowledge of good and evil on our own, in a place of neutral education and experimentation. "Seeing, you will come to believe," he says. However, God's way might be stated, "believing, you will come to see." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. There is no neutral place, no "third kingdom." There is an antithesis as Jesus will say in this passage: "*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with me scatters*" (v23)

**Two Kingdoms** (vv14-23) – Jesus casts out a demon, causing a mute man to speak, and "words" of accusation spew out from those standing against Christ. Even if He does good, Jesus is accused of being in cahoots with the devil (Beelzebul – Lord of the dung). Others ask for a sign from heaven to clear His name. For the sake of the argument, Jesus accepts the premise to show that if it was true, Satan would be undermining his own kingdom. Not only that, Jews who exorcised demons would also be linked with Satan.

Jesus offers a different explanation: He acts by the finger of God, invoking a phrase from Exodus 8:19. Jesus is the new Moses. Satan is like Pharaoh and the unbelieving Pharisees are like the magicians of Egypt, unable to duplicate His miracles. This imagery continues in the picture of the "*strong man*" in vv 21-22 for Israel had plundered the house of Egypt in the midst of its liberation from bondage.

**"Surely the kingdom of God has come upon you..."** (v20) – This is an important, telling phrase, one that we must embrace by faith. We do not live in a day where the "end times" are upon us. Jesus said that the kingdom was being established THEN. The "*stronger Man*" has come and bound the strong man and the plundering is in process.

**Filling the Spiritual Vacuum** (vv24-26) – Getting an unclean spirit out of a man is not necessarily a good thing if he is not then occupied with the Holy Spirit, that is, if he is not born again. This is a part of the discussion of the two kingdoms in order to make a point – there is no third kingdom; there is no middle ground. And Jesus is not speaking solely about an individual man (Matt 12:45). He is speaking to a wicked generation – to Israel who if not born again will find itself in judgment (John 3:18-21). Unbelieving Israel is the Old Israel and is being pushed out by the New Israel.

**Bloodlines or Faithlines?** (vv27-28) – Every opportunity for Jesus to establish Mary as some sort of mediator or co-redeemer or even someone to whom we should pray exists in this little account. Instead, Jesus notes that bloodlines to Him are not the important thing – faith is. Faith that shows itself in faithfulness, in fact, is what Jesus is referring to – "*blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.*" Being an ethnic Jew is not the point of salvation. Being close to Jesus physically was no promise of seeing Him rightly (John 7:5). As one man put it, "Creed is more important than Breed."

**A Sign That Won't Be Seen** (vv29-32) – The sign of Jonah is the sign of the Son of Man to this generation. Jonah's preaching brought about the repentance of the gentile Ninevites (and Jonah hated this). The Ninevites repented to this one prophet while the Israelites rejected all her prophets. The Queen of the South sought the wisdom of Solomon while the Israelites rejected the way of the son of David. What is Jesus promising? A greater Jonah is here; a greater Solomon is here. And in spite of all the signs, Israel will reject her God. Those who were not in covenant with God will hear and see "the Word" and will be brought into covenant, while those who were in covenant with God will reject His Word and will themselves be condemned. Jesus was specifically speaking to and about the *generation* He was addressing (v29, 31, 32).

**Plenty of Light/Bad Eyes** (vv33-36) – This passage is all about epistemology which is the study of knowledge, or "how do we know what we know." If you can't see, it doesn't matter how bright the Light is. God is not hiding the Light (v33). The problem is the eyes that can't see. Clouded eyes misjudge constantly, but clear eyes form right judgment and the Light comes in, illuminating the whole body.

**What Do You See?** – Some applications and thought questions...

**Eyes** – What you see when you open up the Bible depends on what you bring to it. What is the state of your spiritual eyes?

**Obedience as a Sign** – If you are submitting to the Word, believing it, embracing it, and obeying it, this is the sign of the work of the Spirit of God upon you. This is the sign of blessing.

**Privileged Positions** – are only privileges if you take advantage of them properly, that is, with faith. There is a wicked form of presumption wherein God rejects the one who thought he was in a place of privilege. We must walk in faith and obedience today, dependent upon His Holy Spirit.

**The Demand for a Sign** – There is a way to demand a sign that is itself a sign of disobedience. Jesus does not submit to the rationalistic demands of men, not because He is irrational, but because He will not put Himself in a place of judgment from men. We are not to judge the Word. Rather, the Word judges us. Will we believe? Will we follow?

*Dave Hatcher – June 11, 2006*