

AMAZED BY CHRIST?
LUKE 11:14-28

What do people think about Christ? If they are like you, they will be a lover of Christ. But, there are many who don't love Christ. And they will have other evaluations of Him (as you have heard):

- ✓ **He is a good teacher, but He is not God:** this is perhaps the most dominant evaluation of Christ in our day and has a long history of adherents, like Thomas Jefferson who liked the teachings of Christ but rejected and hated His claims to deity and cut those out of his Bible.
- ✓ **He exists, but He is not worth following:** atheist Anthony Flew became a deist but then warned, "if [Christians] think I am going to become a convert to Christ in the near future, they are very much mistaken....[I am] certainly not [Paul] on the road to Damascus."
- ✓ **Whether or not He exists, I won't believe:** it was said of George Orwell, "He was an embittered atheist (the sort of atheist who does not so much disbelieve in God as personally dislike Him)." Aldous Huxley similarly said: "We don't know [about God's existence] because we don't want to know." These are those who attempt to suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).
- ✓ **He might exist, but He is not good:** echoing the religious leaders of Jesus' day, French poet Charles Baudelarie, concluded, "If there is a God, he is the devil." Of this kind of rejection Mark Jones and Rosaria Butterfield wrote, "To claim, 'There is no God,' is one thing, but to testify, 'God is, but He is not good,' is perhaps worse....[This kind of] Unbelief portrays God as an evil tyrant and robs Him and Christ in the gospel of their peculiar glory, from where His attributes most clearly shine forth."
- ✓ **We don't know who He is;** perhaps if He had told us more or done more: this was the request of many in Jesus' day (Lk. 11:16) and it persists today; Woody Allen once said, "I might believe in God if only God would give me some clear sign! Like making a large deposit in my name at a Swiss bank."
- ✓ **We know His claims and they are erroneous and we want nothing to do with Him:** a generation ago, George and Tina Rollason said God had nothing to do with the birth of their daughter, so they named her "Atheist Evolution Rollason." They were following in the footsteps of the French philosopher, Voltaire, who said, "If a miracle occurred in the marketplace of Paris and in the presence of two thousand men, I would rather disbelieve my own eyes than believe the two thousand."

And there are more as well. Most of the people who were present when Christ was on earth were amazed by Him (both in what He said and what He did). But despite their amazement, most did not follow Him. They did not believe and they did not obey. We see that in Luke 11.

As Jesus gets closer to Jerusalem and the cross, He uses a healing miracle to reveal Himself (again) to the people — and to expose the nature of their responses to Him. And there are really only two responses to Christ: people either believe and follow Him, or they disbelieve and disobey Him. There is no middle ground. Everyone is either for Christ or against Christ, submissive to Christ or rebellious against Christ. As we come to this miracle in Luke 11, the gospel writer uses the miracle to confront us with the gospel...

This passage reveals to us the heart of unbelief; when people reject Christ, what is going on internally? These reasons applied in 1st century Judea and 21st century America. This passage reveals the hearts of all unbelievers — your parents, your children, your neighbor, boss, and employee. They reveal the hearts of us in America, and the hearts of those in SEA to whom Will and Natalyn have gone. They help us to remember the reason for evangelism at home and sending missionaries overseas. The heart is bent away from Christ and wants nothing to do with Christ. And the gospel is the simple message of faith in and obedience to Christ. **Listen to what is revealed about Christ and the heart of man in the conversation** between Christ and the crowd:

- 1. A Confrontational Miracle by Christ (v. 14)**
- 2. An Evaluation of Christ (vv. 15-16)**
- 3. A Response by Christ (vv. 17-26)**
- 4. A Reiteration for Christ (vv. 27-28)**

As we come to this passage, you will recognize the similarities between this event and one recorded in **Mt. 12:22-29**. Many commentators think they are the same event because they are so similar. I won't be dogmatic about it, but I am inclined to think they are separate events that reveal a common rejection:

- ✓ Matthew's account was in Galilee, perhaps a year prior to this event; Luke places it on the journey to Jerusalem, mere months before the cross.
- ✓ Luke says the man was mute, while Matthew says he was blind and mute; it seems unlikely that the physician Luke would have omitted that detail.
- ✓ Matthew emphasizes that it is the Pharisees who reject Christ (an official declaration), while Luke only refers to the crowd and it seems to be a more generic rejection.

1. A Confrontational Miracle by Christ (v. 14) — what we need to believe about Christ (Son of Man)

- Many get excited about the miracles of Christ, but what this miracle demonstrates is that the miracles were not ultimately about relieving suffering, but about revealing Christ. So Luke explains the miracle in only one very short verse, while talking about the response to the miracle in 14 verses! The emphasis is not on the miracle, but on what the miracle reveals (about Christ, *and* the people).
- So let's similarly look quickly at this miracle before moving to the responses and revelation.
 - ✓ Jesus **was casting out a demon** — the sense is something like, "He was in the process..." [Remember also that demon possession is an expression of suffering/illness in the Gospels.]
 - ✓ But the verse particularly focuses on the effect of the demon — **it was mute** (illness). That doesn't mean that the demon itself was mute, but that it produced muteness (cf. **the mute man...spoke**).
 - ✓ Notice how Luke talks about the exorcism — the **demon had gone out** is again a reminder that the demon world was submissive to Christ; they had to do what Jesus said (cf. Legion, **8:28, 32**)
 - ✓ But even more, when the demon is gone, the man is healed of his muteness — he begins to speak.
 - ✓ So there is a double healing: the demon is removed and the man is able to speak (w. no therapy).
- And that's the extent of the description of the miracle itself. The remaining thing that Luke says is that **the crowds were amazed**. It's a common response to Jesus' teaching and work (43x; cf. **4:22; 8:25; 9:43**).
 - ✓ There is a sense of admiration in the word — "Wow, that's amazing!" But it doesn't say anything about faith and trust in Christ. It's only a "that's cool" statement (like at football game today). Someone may say, "that's the most amazing thing I've ever eaten..." and then repeat it tomorrow. That's what this word is; there is a sense of superficiality in the excitement.
 - ✓ Luke regularly writes in a way that makes us suspect of the "adoring" responses of the crowds (**4:22, 28-29; 9:43-44**). Their astonishment quickly turns to rejection.
 - ✓ Luke is using the story to reveal the hearts of men — what do they really think about Jesus?
 - ✓ It's helpful to us to lead us in self-examination. And it's helpful to us to understand what is happening when people don't respond in faith to the gospel.

2. An Evaluation of Christ (vv. 15-16) — what the world believes about Christ

- How amazed were they really? Luke gives us two objections to the amazement, “Yes, but...”
- The first objection is particularly condemnable. There is no faith in this “amazement.” ***He casts out demons by Beelzebul...*** (the same thing the Pharisees said in Mt. 12:24).
 - ✓ We know that the name Beelzebul refers to Satan because they also say, ***ruler of the demons***.
 - ✓ This is a unique term and particularly demeaning. The title was a variation of Baalzebub (2 Kings 1, the god of Ekron in Philistia) which meant something like “Baal, the prince.” But simply changing the last consonant changes the meaning to “Lord/Baal of the flies.” It could be that it is not only generally derogatory but also a reference to lord of disease or even “lord” of the flies that circle animal dung.
 - ✓ It was demeaning just at the surface level, but it also is offering a specific evaluation of Christ — He is not the Son of Man who has been revealed in Luke (cf. Dan. 7:13-14). But He is satanic.
 - ✓ They meant that He not only should not be followed but that He should be shunned and avoided. He was not a caregiver, but He was of the greatest of those who harm and destroy.
 - ✓ They could not deny the miracle, so they attacked His character in the most horrific way. The Lord of Glory is esteemed as the minion of the prince of darkness. Our hearts should grieve at the evaluation.
 - ✓ *This is the essence of blasphemy* — to attribute the glorious character and work of God to something demeaning and horrible.
- But that was not the only objection. ***Others...were demanding a sign from Heaven.***
 - ✓ To ask for a sign from Heaven is to ask for OT authentication — like manna (Ex. 16) or Elijah being taken into Heaven (2 Kings 2) or the sun standing still (Josh. 10)
 - ✓ Luke also notes the motive for asking for the sign — it was only ***to test Him***. In fact the word can also be translated “tempt,” so perhaps their desire was to trip Him up so He would “stumble” into some sin or failure. That is entirely reasonable. They were not purely motivated.
 - ✓ This was a “prove it” examination. It also was rooted in unbelief and rejection.
 - ✓ Of course He has been giving “signs” to authenticate His messiahship — He just cast out a demon and the ministry of the 70 (10:1ff) and His teaching (e.g., 10:30ff; cf. Dt. 18:15).
 - ✓ And His response was also a sign (which they missed) — ***He knew their thoughts*** and responded not only to what they said but what they thought and desired. That also was a sign.
- The objections from the crowd was absurd and demeaning. And typical. Unbelief is irrational — at its heart it objects to the authority of Christ. Those who do not want Christ will do anything not to believe.
 - ✓ These objections were not unique for the day; they are familiar to our ears as well. (Which in a sense is hopeful because there is no unbelief that is new under the sun; the Bible has addressed the objections of unbelievers that was helpful in 1st C. Israel and 21st C. US and SEA, and...)
 - ✓ How did Christ answer these objections? He treated them as one objection, and gave multiple reasons why they were foolish and why He is believable —

3. A Response by Christ (vv. 17-26) — why Christ is believable

• Christ is believable — He Knows (v. 17a)

- ✓ The omniscience of God is one of His more well-known attributes (Ps. 139).
- ✓ For Christ to demonstrate omniscience is to demonstrate deity and believability.
- ✓ When Luke says **He knew their thoughts** it is different than when I say to RJ, “I know what you are thinking...” After almost 40 years of marriage, I have a pretty good idea of what she *might* be thinking but I’ve been proven wrong too many times. That’s not what Luke means. He means, Jesus *knows* with precision the exact thoughts that are in them.
- ✓ And He has demonstrated that multiple times in His ministry (e.g., 5:22; 7:39-40; Jn. 2:24-25).
- ✓ Because He knows what is in the heart, He knows what the heart needs, provides what the heart needs — and must be believed (Jn. 1:47-51).

• Christ is believable — He is Unified (vv. 17b-19)

- ✓ That is, He is unified with the Father and He is undivided in His affections and purposes.
- ✓ What the objectors had speculated about Jesus being satanic was ludicrous, as Jesus now demonstrates — if **a kingdom is divided...it is laid waste** (v. 17). You don’t need to have a Civil War to understand that, but when you have a Civil War you really understand that.
- ✓ Similarly, **a house divided...falls** (v. 17b). Cut your house in half and see how it does. We had an issue with our plumbing a few years ago and I talked to a couple of contractors about cutting the slab to get to the problem and was warned, “Don’t do it...you’ll disrupt the integrity of the house.” Cut it completely in half, and it won’t even take a 40 mph burst to drop the house to the ground.
- ✓ Jesus makes the point in v. 18 — **if Satan is divided...how will his kingdom stand?** It won’t. (It won’t stand anyway, but for him to do that would be to actively pursue his own defeat. No general does that volitionally.)
- ✓ Jesus then extends the question in v. 19 — **by whom do your sons cast them out?** We don’t know of any historical record of Pharisees casting out demons, but evidently there were at least attempts (cf. later, Acts 19:11ff). Jesus is saying, “if I am casting out demons by satanic influence, then it must follow that your cohorts also are casting out demons by satanic power.” Of course they would refute that; Jesus is saying if one is satanic then so must the other be satanic. And their attempts to exorcise demons and their rejection of Christ would prove to be the judgment of their unbelief.
- ✓ Jesus is not divided and is not in league with Satan. *He is unified with the Father* and accomplishing the Father’s will and purpose and must therefore be trusted. He is who He says He is (10:9).

• Christ is believable — He is Powerful (vv. 20-23)

- ✓ Along with omniscience, omnipotence demonstrates Christ’s deity as Son of Man.
- ✓ The phrase **finger of God** refers to God’s limitless power. What He does, He does without effort (Ps. 8:3). And what He does *He also does with accountability* (Ex. 8:19; 31:18; Dan. 5:5; OT “signs”).

- ✓ It was no effort for Christ to exorcise the demon and He did it with the power of God.
- ✓ And because that is true, it means that **the kingdom of God has come** — i.e., the King has arrived. They are face-to-face with the Kingdom — believe & it will be inaugurated. Instead they blasphemed.
- ✓ Christ has arrived demonstrating His mastery over the greatest enemy, Satan (4:1ff). From the beginning to end of His ministry He demonstrates omnipotent authority over Satan. And that is designed to compel faith in those who see and hear Him.
- ✓ He has demonstrated His authority because Satan is a **strong man**. Satan is not omnipotent in strength, but as the pre-eminent angel, he had massive power. He is the dragon who took a third of the angels with him (Rev. 12:3-4), he has ability to blind and delude those who are not Christ's (2 Cor. 4:4), he is behind the world system (2 Cor. 10:3-5), and he is the roaring lion who persistently seeks to devour and destroy (1 Pt. 5:8). Yet even though he guards his own house, Jesus (who is **someone stronger**), **attacks him** and strips him of his armor and protection. Victory belongs to Christ and Satan is no longer in control. He has lost. Christ has triumphed powerfully (Col. 2:15).
- ✓ Jesus' emphasis is in v. 23 — on whose side are you? If you are **not with me, [you are] against Me**. It's a simple statement. *You must be with Christ*. If you are not, you are against Him. There is no middle ground. If you are not following Christ, you are opposed to Christ. You cannot partially love Christ any more than you can partially love your spouse. (When she asks you, "do you love me?" see what she says when you say, "Well I think I mostly do...probably 45-55% anyway. Usually.")
- ✓ The Son of Man is worthy of and demands our whole hearted allegiance to Him. He came to save us from all our sin so that we would live in the freedom and fellowship of whole obedience to Him.
- ✓ There is no neutrality with Christ. If you try to be Switzerland with Christ, you will be judged.

• Christ is believable — He Warns (vv. 24-26)

- ✓ These verses are a parable that pictures a person who is released from a demon (v. 24) but the demon wants to inhabit someone so he goes back and checks out the person he used to inhabit (he still considers the man to be his personal possession, **my house**). Everything is "cleaned up" (v. 25), but not under the control of Christ. So he brings **seven more powerful demons** to reinhabit the man. And things then are **worse than at the first** (v. 26).
- ✓ Jesus is picturing a person who isn't aligned with Christ and he attempts to reform by some personal moral improvement plan. He cleans up and sweeps out, but he isn't interested in Christ as his Master. He believes he is capable on his own. And his end will be worse than his beginning.
 - Davis: "A spiritual vacuum unfilled with commitment to Jesus...is leaving itself open to utter spiritual ruin."
 - Sproul: "It is not enough merely to eliminate a sin from our lives. We need to have the fulness of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. In the final analysis, we are powerless to achieve righteousness. Only God can bear the fruit of righteousness in us, and that's why, if we would fill the vacuum in our lives, we must flee to Christ, and embrace him." "That I may know Him..."

- These affirmations of who Christ is demonstrate the point of His miracle — He is the Son of Man, He is the Messiah, He is the One and only Master and King and provider of salvation. There are only two possibilities about Him — *belief or unbelief*. He cannot be accepted as an *almost* King or *almost* Savior. To be *almost* saved is to be completely under God's wrath. One either believes or not. No other options.
 - ✓ *What is your condition today?* Churches are filled with people who have attempted a self-improvement plan (v. 25), but without Christ. "Submitting to Christ is too much. A little Christ is ok but we don't want too much mastery. We can handle some things on our own." If that is you, I urge you to repent of your self-sufficiency and trust Christ to save you and to live for Him alone (9:57ff). Jesus has no part-time employees or partially committed soldiers.
 - ✓ *If you have unbelieving family or friends* or you want to engage in cross-cultural missions, this is the real battle for souls. People will have many excuses and offer many objections, but the issue is always the same in every place and in every time: are you with Christ or against Him? Make your appeals on that basis — join the team of the Victor and follow Him in all things...

4. A Reiteration for Christ (vv. 27-28) — this is why Christ healed, and what must be believed about Him

- There is one more comment from the crowd — an unnamed woman who interrupts Jesus **while He was saying these things** and said, **Blessed**... She wasn't wrong. Mary was blessed (1:46ff).
 - ✓ There was blessing for Mary and there was blessing for the nation of Israel.
 - ✓ But the blessing that will satisfy is the blessing that is more than mere biological connection.
 - ✓ The real blessing of Christ is when we belong to Him by faith and **hear and observe the Word of God**.
 - ✓ You might hear in these words a reiteration of the parable of the soils (8:4-15). We want to be the fruitful soil that is productive for the sake of Christ.
 - ✓ What does it mean to be a Christian?
 - It means to **hear** — take in (read, study, meditate) on the **Word of God**.
 - And being a Christian means **obeying** the Word that we know.
 - This is what we do in discipling and this is what we do in missions — **Mt. 28:20** — "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." It's no more than that and no more complicated.
 - ✓ Jesus is not correcting the woman like He did the others, but He is adding to it the most important reality — "not just this, but even more, that..."
- Jesus came to seek and save those who were lost and to keep them from returning to their lost activities (19:10; cf. ch. 15 and parables of lost things).
- And now He has returned to the point of the miracle of the exorcism (v. 14). He is reiterating the meaning of the miracle. He is Christ and the Son of Man. *Be amazed by Him*. But *don't only be amazed* by Him. Know what He says and obey what He says. That's why He came. That's our priority for our own lives, and that's the message we take to our community and the world.