

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

CHAPTER 12, VERSES 24-37

12:24 - But when the Pharisees¹ heard it, they said, This fellow² doth not cast out³ devils⁴, but by Beelzebub⁵ the prince⁶ of the devils⁴.

12:25 - And Jesus⁷ knew their thoughts⁸, and said unto them, Every kingdom⁹ divided¹⁰ against itself¹¹ is brought¹² to desolation¹³; and every city¹⁴ or house¹⁵ divided¹⁰ against itself¹¹ shall not stand¹⁶:

12:26 - And if Satan¹⁷ cast out³ Satan¹⁷, he is divided¹⁰ against himself¹⁸; how shall then his kingdom⁹ stand¹⁶?

12:27 - And if I by Beelzebub⁵ cast out³ devils⁷, by whom do your children¹⁹ cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges²⁰.

12:28 - But if I cast out³ devils⁴ by the Spirit of God²¹, then the kingdom of God²² is come unto you²³.

12:29 - Or else how can one enter²⁴ into a strong man's²⁵ house²⁶, and spoil²⁷ his goods²⁸, except²⁹ he first bind³⁰ the strong man²⁵? and then he will spoil²⁷ his house¹⁵.

12:30 - He that is not with me³¹ is against me³²; and he that gathereth not³³ with me³¹ scattereth abroad³⁴.

12:31 - Wherefore I say unto you²⁶, All manner of sin³⁵ and blasphemy³⁶ shall be forgiven³⁷ unto men³⁸; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost³⁹ shall not be forgiven³⁷ unto men³⁸.

12:32 - And whosoever speaketh a word⁴⁰ against the Son of man⁴¹, it shall be forgiven³⁷ him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost⁴², it shall not be forgiven¹³⁷ him, neither in this world⁴³, neither in the world to come⁴⁴.

12:33 - Either make⁴⁵ the tree good⁴⁶, and his fruit good⁴⁷; or else make the tree corrupt⁴⁸, and his fruit corrupt⁴⁹: for the tree⁵⁰ is known⁵¹ by his fruit⁵².

12:34 - O⁵³ generation⁵⁴ of vipers⁵⁵, how can ye⁵⁶, being evil⁵⁷, speak⁵⁸ good things⁵⁹? for out of the abundance⁶⁰ of the heart⁶¹ the mouth speaketh⁶².

12:35 - A good man⁶³ out of⁶⁴ the good treasure⁶⁵ of the heart⁶¹ bringeth forth⁶⁶ good things⁵⁹: and an evil man⁶⁷ out of⁶⁴ the evil treasure⁶⁸ bringeth forth⁶⁶ evil things⁶⁹.

12:36 - But I say unto you⁷⁰, That every idle word⁷¹ that men shall speak⁷², they shall give account⁷³ thereof in the day of judgment⁷⁴.

12:37 - For by thy words⁷⁵ thou shalt be justified⁷⁶, and by thy words⁷⁷ thou shalt be condemned⁷⁸.

CHAPTER 3, VERSES 22-30

3:22 - And the scribes⁷⁹ which came down from Jerusalem⁸⁰ said, He hath Beelzebub⁵, and by the prince⁶ of the devils⁷ casteth he out devils⁷.

3:23 - And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables⁸¹, How can Satan¹⁷ cast out³ Satan¹⁷?

3:24 - And if a kingdom⁹ be divided¹⁰ against itself¹¹, that kingdom⁹ cannot stand¹⁶.

3:25 - And if a house²⁶ be divided¹⁰ against itself¹¹, that house²⁶ cannot stand¹⁶.

3:26 - And if Satan¹⁷ rise up⁸² against himself, and be divided¹⁰, he cannot stand¹⁶, but hath an end⁸³.

3:27 - No man⁸⁴ can enter²⁴ into a strong man's²⁵ house¹⁵, and spoil²⁷ his goods²⁸, except²⁹ he will first bind³⁰ the strong man²⁵; and then he will spoil²⁷ his house¹⁵.

3:28 - Verily⁸⁵ I say unto you, All sins⁸⁶ shall be forgiven³⁷ unto the sons of men⁸⁷, and blasphemies³⁶ wherewith soever they shall blaspheme³⁶:

3:29 - But he that shall blaspheme³⁶ against the Holy Ghost³⁹ hath never forgiveness⁸⁸, but is in danger⁸⁹ of eternal damnation⁹⁰:

3:30 - Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit⁹¹.

NOTHING RECORDED

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CHRONOLOGY: After April 30, 28CE; **In the Spring of 28CE (Possibly between May and July of 28CE).** This chapter may have taken place during Jesus' ministry throughout Galilee which would have taken at the very least a month or two. It may also have occurred shortly after the Galilean ministry.

LOCATION: Somewhere in **Galilee**, quite possibly **Capernaum**

COMMENTARY: In the previous Chapter, Jesus cured a man from blindness and deafness. He furthermore recognized that the man was also possessed of a devil. Exercising His divine priesthood, Jesus cast the evil spirit from the man. In this Chapter, we learn that among a crowd of observers were Pharisees and scribes who had come down from Jerusalem with the probable task of observing Jesus and evaluating His actions. It was apparent to all that Jesus had performed an incredible miracle. In fact, there was no denying it. The Pharisees had a choice to make. They could accept Jesus as a great prophet, even the promised Messiah, or they would have to discredit Him as a fraud. The latter seemed to be the intention of their hearts. As they sat contemplating the best way to discredit Him, they thought to declare that Jesus had cast out the devil by the power of Beelzebub (the prince of the devils). Jesus used the gift of discernment to know their thoughts. He quickly refuted their planned attack with a discourse that approached the issue from 6 different points;

- Rebuttal #1** - Jesus could not be an agent of the devil because a kingdom that is divided cannot stand, but is destined to fall.
- Rebuttal #2** - If Jesus was casting out devils by the power of the devil then by what power do the pious Jews use when they cast out devils?
- Rebuttal #3** - Jesus teaches that Satan's stronghold could not be safely conquered unless the strong man of the house be first bound by the Messiah.
- Rebuttal #4** - Be cautious with your thoughts. If the Holy Ghost bears witness of Jesus, and you sin against that knowledge, your ability to be forgiven will be revoked.
- Rebuttal #5** - Jesus declares that a man's allegiances are best identified by His works; i.e. a tree is known by its fruits.
- Rebuttal #6** - Use caution in your words. Jesus knows your thoughts and if you declare them you should be prepared to be judged according to them.

Many scholars speculate that the contents of this chapter are contained in the Gospel of Luke as well, though there is compelling arguments that Luke is a separate story. One can compare the various Gospel accounts in the chart below;

Accounting	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Jesus casts out a Devil from a Blind and Mute man	Matthew 12:22-23	=	Luke 11:14
Jesus accused of performing the miracle by the power of Beelzebub / House divided	Matthew 24-26	= Mark 3:22-26	= Luke 11:15, 17-18
Jesus asks if He is casting out Devils by Beelzebub, whose power do they use?	Matthew 27-28	=	Luke 11:19-20
Jesus refutes them with the parable of the Strong man	Matthew 29	= Mark 3:27	= Luke 11:21-22
Jesus refutes them stating that he that is not with Him is against them	Matthew 30	=	Luke 11:23
Jesus speaks of sinning against the Holy Ghost	Matthew 31-32b	= Mark 28-30	=

FOOTNOTES:

1- Pharisees – The word “Pharisees” is translated from the Greek word “Φαρισαῖος” or “Pharisaios”. The Greek word is a transliteration of the Hebrew word “פְּרָשִׁי” or “parash”. The Hebrew word means to make distinct, declare, distinguish, or separate.

The Pharisees were an elite group of Jews. Contrary to the understanding of many, they were a relatively small portion of the society. They were separate and distinct from the average Jew. Josephus records that there were only about 6,000 of them in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Only those who demonstrated an adherence to the pharisaic philosophy were admitted, and that only happened after years of proving themselves. It was generally followed by years of discipleship under a Pharisaic Rabbi.

Pharisees were experts in the Law. This was a requirement for admission into the group. Consequently, they viewed themselves as protectors of the Law. While the Sadducees were the aristocrats of Jewish Society, ruling in the Temple in Jerusalem, the Pharisees ruled in the synagogues throughout the land. The Pharisees did not necessarily come from wealth. In spite of sometimes humble beginnings, the Pharisees were generally prideful and self-righteous. They watched over the common people, quickly reacting to anything that didn't conform to their beliefs. The more pious of the Pharisees congregated to the larger cities, with the greatest residing in Jerusalem itself.



It is of little wonder that the Pharisees reacted to the works of Jesus the way they did. **“We are emphatically told, that tidings of the raising of the dead at Nain had gone forth into Judaea. No doubt they reached the leaders at Jerusalem. There seems just sufficient time between this and the healing of the demonized dumb on the return-journey to Capernaum, to account for the presence there of the Pharisees, who were expressly described by St. Mark as ‘the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem’.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 574). They came to protect their interest. They couldn't tolerate a rouge leader directing things in a way that didn't serve their concern. Upon finding Jesus, they found a Man performing works beyond their understanding. He threatened the system that they had developed. **“This greatly alarmed the Pharisees who could not deny the miracles but said it was all a trick which Jesus did by the power of the devil. By using this strategy, the Pharisees didn't have to deny the miracles, but simply dismissed Jesus as a charlatan and a tool of Satan. And who wants to support the miracles of the devil?”** (The Days of the Living Christ, Volume 1, W. Cleon Skousen, page 319). This line of reasoning left them as the spiritual and legal authorities of the Law, at least in their mind. **“This Pharisaic approach to Jesus and his ministry; this Rabbinic way of turning light into darkness; this priest-ridden denial and denunciation not of the**

miracle itself, but of the power by which it was wrought – all this is perfect illustration not of how Lucifer, in all ages, fights the truth.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 144).



The Pharisees came to see, and yet they saw not. They were eye witnesses to Jesus’ miracle, and though they physically saw, they were spiritually blind. They denied the power heaven, in favor of some lesser power. An interesting fact is that miracles don’t create faith. Faith is a gift of the spirit obtained by sincere desire, and earnest searching. Miracles are performed by faith, and reinforce the faith of those that have previously obtained it. There are many examples of miracles being performed to the faithless, who despite receiving miraculous manifestations from heaven, don’t believe. Laman and Lemuel are great examples of this. They saw angels. They spoke with at least one face to face. They watched Nephi perform miracles, and yet they remained faithless. The faithful and the faithless react quite differently to miracles. **“Jesus’ miraculous works generated serious differences of opinion and divisiveness about how people regarded him. Some Jews couldn’t help but believe, although certain Pharisees accused him of using satanic power to exorcise evil spirits.”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 273).

Though the Pharisees may not have recognized it, they were clearly working as Satan’s agents trying to undermine God’s work. Satan is often very deceptive in his assault on good. He often masks evil as good, and persuades men to believe that good is indeed evil. Speaking of the Pharisees, Elder McConkie explained, **“So perfectly does this Satan-born, Lucifer-inspired, devil-directed attack of the Pharisees illustrate how the enemy of all righteousness fights the truth, so cunning and evil is the approach, that it is worth our while to dwell upon it with some particularity.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 144). The actions of the Pharisees in this chapter are a great example of Satan’s methods.

- 2- **This fellow** – The word “fellow” is implied in the translation. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the passage “this fellow” as “this man”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 24, page 30).

The Pharisees came from Jerusalem expecting to see a man. Even so, they must have recognized that there was something different about Jesus when compared to other men, even great men. His miracles were becoming increasingly undeniable. More people were witnessing them, and their magnitude was astounding. The Pharisees must have been forced to acknowledge “this fellow” from Galilee. How they recognized Him is a different story. **“Whatever view the leaders at Jerusalem may have taken of the raising at Nain, it could no longer be denied that miracles were wrought by Jesus. At least, what to us seem miracles, yet not to them, since, as we have seen, ‘miraculous’ cures and the expelling of demons lay within the sphere of their ‘extraordinary ordinary’ – were not miracles in our sense, since they were, or professed to be, done by their ‘own children’. The mere fact, therefore, of such cures, would present no difficulty to them. To us a single well-ascertained miracle would form irrefragable evidence of the claims of Christ; to them it would not. They could believe in the ‘miracles,’ and yet not in the Christ. To them the question would not be, as to us, whether they were miracles – but, By what power, or in what Name, He did these deeds?”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 574-575).

- 3- **cast out** – The term “cast out” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκβάλλω” or “ekballō”. It means to cast out, drive out, or to send out. It carries the idea of forced compulsion or violence.

Most biblical scholars understand the concept of demonic possessions; however, lack the understanding of the specific mechanics. They know even less about the removal of such possessions. The Lord has not seen fit to reveal how an evil spirit can occupy a mortal body assigned to our spirits. We do not know all the restriction and limitations placed on that act. We do know that the Lord permits it from time to time. We also know that the Priesthood after the order of the Son of God, even Jesus the Messiah, is the power by which spirits are removed from possessed beings.

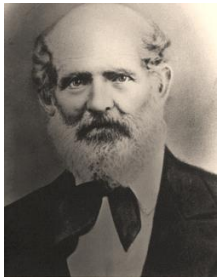


The idea that an evil spirit, a spirit that followed Satan in the pre-mortal life and was cast out of God’s presence for rebellion, can just possess someone’s mortal body at their leisure is ridiculous. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, and transgressed God’s laws, they faced the consequences of the fall. This subjected them to Satan and separated them from God. Adam and Eve were surely fearful about the ability of Satan and His followers to rule over them. Since Satan and his followers were denied bodies of flesh and blood, they desired, and still desire, to possess the bodies created for mankind. The Lord reassured Adam and Eve as He commanded Satan, **“And I will put enmity between thee”** (Satan) **“and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”** (Moses 4:21). The inference is that Satan may have power to act upon us, but we are given the power to reject and overcome him. The Lord explained, **“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.”** (Moses 4:4). There appears to be a direct relationship between Satan’s ability to act upon us, and our personal disobedience to God’s commandments. Additionally, we know that God will not allow Satan to act upon us more than we can handle. The Apostle Paul taught, **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”** (1st Corinthians 10:13). We must therefore assume that even a soul who has a propensity to do evil, but is incapable of bearing the possession of an evil spirit, will not be suffered to endure such a trial. And if a soul is burdened with such a fate, the Lord will provide opportunity to resist and break free. Of course, the surest way to repeal Satan is by obedience to the word of the Lord. We would therefore conclude that those who are possessed of evil spirits are most likely those who, through disobedience, have allowed Satan and his followers to bring them into subjections, being fully capable of choosing otherwise.

The possession of men by evil spirits was not isolated to the time of Jesus. In Old Testament times Josephus explains that King Solomon knew how to cast out devils, and practiced that ability on men so possessed. Though Josephus makes inference to apostate forms of exorcism, it is accepted that Solomon successfully practiced exorcism. He wrote, "God also enabled Solomon to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and health-bringing to men. He composed such incantations also, by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him also the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons so that they never return, and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing people who were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this. He put a ring that had a root which was one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon in the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured the demon to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man; and when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly." (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 8, Chapter 2, Verse 5).

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish society was largely apostate. The proper act of casting out an evil spirit was, and is, performed using priesthood authority in the name of the mighty Jehovah, whom we know as Jesus Christ. Where priesthood is unavailable, the Lord honors the faith of those who cast out devils in His name; calling upon the power of His priesthood. The Jews lost this knowledge, and the authority thereof. They resorted to folk magic, incantations, and strange concoctions to perform this priesthood function. Josephus writes of one strange plant root that the Jews relied upon to cast out devils. He records, "In the valley of Macherus there is a certain root called by the same name. Its colour is like to that of flame, and towards evening it sends out a certain ray like lightning. It is not easily taken by such as would do so, but recedes from their hands, nor will it yield itself to be taken quietly until either the urine of a woman, or her menstrual blood, be poured upon it; nay, even then it is certain death to those who touch it, unless anyone take and hang the root itself down from his hand, and so carry it away. It may also be taken another way without danger, which is this: they dig a trench all round about it, till the hidden part of the root be very small; they then tie a dog to it, and when the dog tries hard to follow him that tied him, this root is easily plucked up, but the dog dies immediately, as if it were instead of the man that would take the plant away; nor after this need anyone be afraid of taking it into their hands. Yet after all these pains in getting it, it is only valuable on account of one virtue which it possesses, that if it be brought to sick persons, it drives away those called demons." (The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 7, Chapter 6, Verse 3). Regardless of the complexity, reasonableness or sophistication of the exorcism, if it lacks priesthood authority or faith in that power, it is false. Satan does not fear garlic, or powerful roots. He does not respond to magical spells or eloquent words. "Devils are not cast out except by the power of faith and the authority of the priesthood. Lucifer's ministers exercise the power to perform many miracles in imitation of those done by the Lord's authorized servants. But no one, acting pursuant to a delegation of authority from the devil, ever casts one of his kindred spirits out of the mortal tenements such spirit had unlawfully inhabited." (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 268).

The Jews were not surprised that Jesus performed an exorcism. It is doubtful that the Jews were successful in actually casting out a devil; however, the Jews blamed many mysterious conditions and illnesses on demonic possession. It is possible that their herbal concoctions had some success in alleviating these illnesses, which they would consider a successful exorcism. What was significant with Jesus' exorcism was the magnitude of the recipient's condition (being deaf and dumb) and the fact that no one could produce the miracles he did. They could see the difference between His works and theirs. They desperately looked for a reason that placed them in a favorable light. They accused Him of doing His exorcism by the power of the devil. Of course, Jesus quickly pointed out that if He cast out devils by the power of the devil, then their exorcisms must also be by the same power. Barclay explained, "The Jews themselves practiced exorcism; there were Jews who expelled demons and wrought cures. If he was practicing exorcism by the power of the prince of devils, then they must be doing the same, for they were dealing with the same diseases and they had at least sometimes the same effect. Let us then look at the customs and the methods of the Jewish exorcists, for they were a remarkable contrast to the methods of Jesus." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 41). Jesus did not rely on any earthly remedy. He performed His work purely by and through the power of heaven. "Jesus, appealing to current Jewish practices of exorcism, throws the challenges back to his critics." (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 155).



ZEBEDEE
COLTRIN

Demonic possessions, and the need for exorcisms did not disappear after Jesus' mortal ministry. The problem is that many of us do not recognize them, or classify them as something else. Many have claimed that at least some of the mentally ill among us are indeed possessed. Though there may be possessed individuals diagnosed as mentally ill, it is greatly irresponsible to classify the mentally ill as possessed. Demonic possession generally begins with one's association with evil and evil acts. Prolonged evil welcomes greater association with evil spirits. Such conditions, in some cases, allow for an evil spirit to actually possess one's body. That being said, we should not be surprised that possessions are also allowed by heaven for divine purposes. In the early days of the church, the Lord permitted demonic possessions so that the early members might gain an understanding of the adversary, and the power of the priesthood of God. Zebedee Coltrin relates the following story: "[I] first saw the Prophet Joseph at a prayer meeting at the house of Father Morley. He was then a beardless young man. During the meeting the powers of darkness were made manifest in a remarkable degree, causing some to make horrid noises, and others to throw themselves violently

around. One man by the name of Leman Copley, standing at the back side of the house was taken by a supernatural power, and thrown into the window. Then Joseph said to Lyman [Wight] "Go and cast the devil out of Leman." He did so, and the devil entered into a brother by the name of Harvey Green and threw him upon the floor in convulsions. Then Joseph laid hands upon him and rebuked the spirit from him and from the house, upon which the spirit left him, and went outside among a crowd of men standing near the door and made a swath among them several feet wide, throwing them violently to the ground." (Zebedee Coltrin 1804-1877).



This whole conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees over the casting out of evil spirits is a type of something much larger. The world (represented by the Pharisees) would have you believe that they have all the answers to life's problems. They have even convinced themselves of their own superiority. In reality, the eternal answers are divine (represented by the Son of God; Jesus). Jesus was more than the correct answer to the blind and dumb man. He is the answer to all of life's problems. Barclay wrote, "These were the things the Jewish exorcists did, and, as so often, they were a symbol. Men sought their deliverance from the evils and the sorrows of humanity in their magic and their incantations. Maybe even these things for a little while, in the mercy of God, brought some relief; but in Jesus there came the word of God with its serene power to bring to men the perfect deliverance which they had wistfully and even

desperately sought, and which, until he came, they had never been able to find.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 43). What Jesus brought to the table was unique. He brought a salvation and freedom from the shackles of hell that no other man, during any other age, era or dispensation was capable. **“By casting out devils Jesus offered conclusive and irrefutable proof that he was the promised Messiah.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 268).

4- **devils** – The word “devils” is translated from the Greek word “δαίμόνιον” or “daimonion”. It means the divine power, deity, or divinity. It can also mean a spirit inferior to God, or an evil spirit. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “devils” as “demons” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 24, page 30).

The concept of the devil is misunderstood by much of the world. The apostasy distorted this doctrine and left us with an odd concept of red men with barbed tails and pitch forks. Truly, Satan knows that a distorted understanding of our common enemy makes it easier for us to be deceived. How can one conquer an enemy that one does not know? The Jews at Jesus' time were no different than the fallen peoples and cultures of the earth today. **“These Jews believed both in devils and in an organized kingdom of evil spirits which was presided over by the prince of devils, Beelzebub.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 269). Beelzebub, who we will discuss in greater detail in footnote #5 of this chapter, was an idol worshipped by many culture of the time and for centuries prior. He too was a confused representation of the Devil.

The Jews had an odd understanding as to who the Devil was and the extent of his powers. In the apocryphal book of Tobit, there is a strange Jewish accounting that helps us understand the Jewish view of the devils capabilities. In the story, Tobit is told by the angel that he is to marry Sara, the daughter of Raguel. She is a beautiful maiden with a great dowry, and she herself is good. She has been, in turn, married to seven different men, all of whom perished on their wedding night, because Sara was loved by a wicked demon, who would allow none to approach her. Tobit is afraid, but the angel tells him, **“On the night when thou shalt come into the marriage chamber, thou shalt take the ashes of perfume, and shalt lay them upon some of the heart and liver of the fish, and shalt make a smoke with it; and the devil shall smell it and flee away, and never come again any more”** (Tobit 6:16). So Tobit did and the devil was banished for ever (Tobit 8:1-4).

The reality is, the devil is a spirit. He is a spirit in the same fashion that all of us were spirits. Eons ago, God the Father created spirit children. These spirit children received spirit bodies that resemble us in the flesh and were created in Father's own image. These spirit bodies however, were made from much more refined substance and lacked the tangible abilities that our mortal bodies have. Our spirits house our intelligences, which we learn could not be created and are eternal in nature.

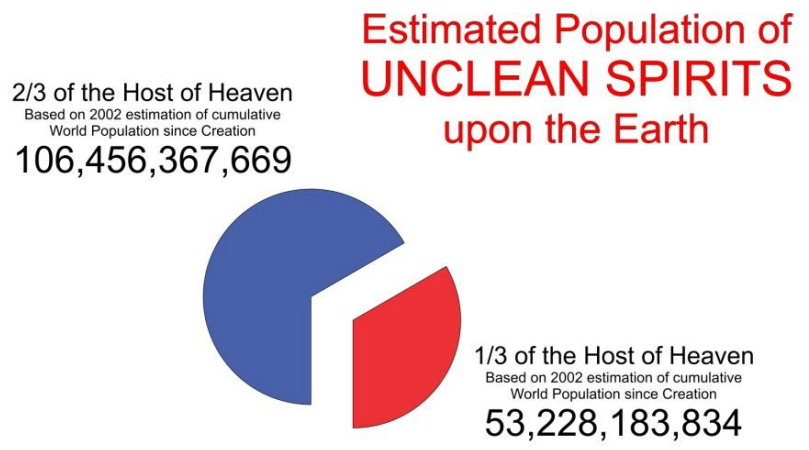
As spirits, we were taught and trained with the ultimate goal of becoming like our Father in Heaven; even God. You and I were in this vast group of spirits and so was the devil. I would conservatively estimate that the number of spirits in the spirit world, associated with this earth, at 159,684,551,503 spirits (See the chart above). In the realm of the spirits, the devil was known by the name "Lucifer". He was our spirit brother. Translated literally, his name means "light-bearer". Many have used the meaning of his name to speculate that he was one of the first born of the Father and a righteous spirit in the beginning. We know that Jesus was the first born of all of Father's children, but many would suggest that Lucifer came soon thereafter. They would further support the argument by the scripture in Isaiah that calls Lucifer the **"son of the morning"** (Isaiah 14:12). We should know that there is no revealed doctrine supporting this theory. In fact, the Lord is clear that Lucifer was a liar from the beginning. The Doctrine and Covenants records, **"the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning."** (Doctrine and Covenants 93:25).

As we were taught, God extended to us the privilege and power to choose. This was a foundational component to the plan for our progression. To properly progress, we needed to learn how to choose good over evil. God directed our older brother Jesus (God's first born) to present the plan for our progression. This presentation was known as the "Council in Heaven". Jesus was known as "Jehovah" in the spirit world. His name literally means "I exist" or "eternal". He is consistent without end. He is truth everlasting. His presentation of the Father's plan was perfect, and being true to His Father He gave all the glory of the plan to His Father. This was significant because Father's plan called for a Redeemer to save us from our errors at great sacrifice. It also required us to accept redemption on God's terms. Jesus was called to that end, and yet He did not desire to receive the glory that was His Father's. Lucifer rebelled against the plan, offering a different version that named him as the redeemer. His plan would save us regardless of our choices. We would not have to accept redemption, but rather it would be inherently ours. Such a plan would destroy the vital principle of agency to choose. In Lucifer's plan, he would be the redeemer of man and therefore would lay claim to all the glory. We would also not progress because there would be no consequence for our errors, and as many have learned our consequences are our greatest instructors.

Following the Council in Heaven, Lucifer led a rebellion among us; the spirit children of God. The rebellion became so intense that it is called in scripture the "War in Heaven". There were no swords or guns in this war, but the fatalities were even more severe. God allowed His children to choose. This precious fundamental gift of choice was protected by the Father so that we might choose for ourselves and in the process progress. Those that chose not to progress, and follow Lucifer, were cast out of heaven. At the close of the counsel, Father lost 1/3 of His children to Lucifer's rebellion. An estimated 53,228,183,834 spirit children chose not to come to mortality and follow Father's plan. They were cast out of Father's presence, and without mortal bodies they were confined to the earth. They are very real, but lack the physical capabilities and powers that are gain with tabernacles of flesh. They are envious of our bodies, and would love to have them.

Lucifer's rebellion earned him the name Satan, which literally means "adversary" or "enemy". Chief among his lies is the false doctrine that happiness can be achieved by some other means than God's plan. He is an enemy to God, and teaches the great lies that salvation can come through him. Hence, he is also called the devil. The word devil means "slanderer", "liar", or "false accuser". All that followed him share the title devil.

At the time of Jesus, Satan and his fellow devils were pedaling the same lies. They were teaching the children of men that alternative choices to God would bring desired results. They also minimize Jesus' role and the necessity of Father's plan. In our story, **“The orthodox officials never questioned Jesus' power to exorcise demons. They did not need to, for exorcism was a common phenomenon then, as it still is, in the East. What they did say was that Jesus' power was due to the fact that he was in league with the king of the demons, that, as one commentator puts it, 'it was by the great demon he cast out the little demons.' People have always believed in 'black magic,' and that is what they claimed Jesus was practicing.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 78). Satan was promoting Jesus as unnecessary and common.



The Population of the Earth in mid-2002_{CE} was 6,215,000,000. If the world had ended at that point, and the cumulative population of the Earth to that point was 106,456,367,669 people, then we can safely say that there are at least 8.56 unclean spirits (spirits cast out of Heaven for rebellion) per every person alive on the earth at that time.

5- **Beelzebub** – The word “Beelzebub” is translated from the Greek word “Βεελζεβούλα” or “Beelzeboul”. Literally translated it means “lord of the house”. It is a name used for Satan, the prince of evil spirits. The Greek word is believed to be a transliteration of the Aramaic word “ܒܥܠ ܒܝܬ” or “Ba’al Zebuwb”. The Aramaic word means literally “lord of the fly”. Baal-zebub was a Philistine deity worshipped at Ekron. He was often referred to by a shortened name, “Baal”. Baal was worshipped as a false God. His origins are believed to be Chaldean. The Chaldean god by the same name was unaffectionately called the “dung-god” by the Jews. Jewish scholars had interrupted the title “Baal Zebub” as “Lord of the Flies” as the Hebrews way of calling Baal a “pile of dung” and his followers vermin. It is a play on words “Zeboub” meaning flies.



ANCIENT FIGURINE OF BAAL OR BEELZEBUB










STATUE OF BAAL

The word “Beel” is thought to be a form of word “Baal”. The Hebrew word “Ba’al” or “בעל” signifies an “owner”, “lord” or “master” and gives inference to the idea that the followers are slaves or indentured to “Baal”. In contrast, Hebrew has another word used for “master”; “adownai” or “אדוני”. This Hebrew word is often translated as Lord, King, husband, prince, and governor. It is the Hebrew word most often used in reference to Jehovah in the Old Testament. The two words seem to be similar and yet upon closer

evaluation they are clearly opposing. The one master (Baal) is an oppressive owner, while the other (Adown) is a benevolent king. The name “Baal” is **“One of the name-titles of the devil. It was also applied in ancient Israel to a heathen God.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 269).

Baal was considered a fertility god. He is found among most of the Middle Eastern communities. He was especially common among the Canaanites. As a chief fertility God, he was seen the giver of life. This is obviously a blatant imitation of the Messiah who is the author of eternal life.

BEELZEBUB WAS KNOWN BY MANY NAMES THROUGH THE AGES

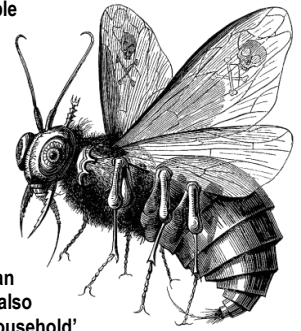
Canaanite Baal	Egyptian Amon	Babylonian Bel or Marduk	Roman Zeus	Greek Belos	Philistine Beelzebub	Armenian Hadad
						

Baal or Beelzebub has been known by many different names throughout the ages. He is a representation of Satan, and a great imposter. The tower of Babel may be the first appearance of Baal. There he was known by the name “Bel” or “Marduk”. King Nimrod built a great tower that stretched to heaven, at least symbolically. It was a seven stepped pyramid with a temple built at its summit. In the summit was an idol, an effigy of Marduk (Baal). Nimrod gathered the peoples of the earth to worship Marduk. They did so by sacrificing their first born to Marduk. This was a twisted and sick imitation of the sacrifice that Jesus would make as the redeemer, and designed to lead people away from the Savior of mankind. What is even worse is the added pagan rites that were practiced, further confusing people. Nimrod required his priests to eat the flesh of the sacrifices. Hence, the word “Canni - Baal” or “Cannibal”. This is an assault on the ordinance of sacrament where we symbolically partake of the body and blood of Jesus’ sacrifice.

Baal worship often included the act of child sacrifice. The child victims were preferred to be the first born, but families often sacrificed multiple children. The victims were generally offered up alive, often being cremated to death. It was tradition to make such offerings on a moonlit night. It was performed on a stone altar built on a “high place”, during a time when the Sun was not present. The altars were large platform like stages upon which fires could be built and humans sacrificed. The body of the victim was placed on the arms of an effigy of Baal made of brass. The priests lit fires that heated the effigies from its lower parts. The victims were placed on the burning outstretched hands. As they were burned alive their muscles contracted, and they cried out vehemently. The pain caused the victims mouths to gap open. They called the phenomenon of the “act of laughing”. The priests beat drums, played flutes, lyres and tambourines to drown out the cries so that the parents were not subjected to them. It was intended to be a joyous occasion and the music prevented anyone’s heart to be moved by the saddening cries.



As time progressed, Satan represented himself in different forms of the false God "Baal". "Satan had several aliases in Second Temple times, such as 'Asmodeus' (Tobias 3:8), 'Belial' or 'Beliar' (Jub. 1:20; 2nd Cor. 6:15), and 'Mastema' (Jub. 10:8, 11:5, 17:16), and 'Beelzebub' could certainly have been another." (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 272). All of these God's were thought to be the same false God; Baal by different names. "The name 'Beelzebub' can be traced back to Ugaritic texts in which the Canaanite god Baal is known as zbl ba'al = 'Exalted Baal'; the reverse form, ba'al zbl, would mean 'Baal is raised'. A similar Old Testament name for a Philistine deity, Baalzebub='lord of the flies' (2nd Kings 1:2), is probably a contemptuous deformation of this Canaanite divine title, like the transformation of b'l into bst ('shame') in the names 'Jerubbaal/Jerubbesheth and 'Ishbaal/Ishbosheth'." (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 272). In all cases, the God is considered the ruler or lord of this world. It shares an attitude Lucifer conveyed in the great Council in Heaven where he desired to be the redeemer of the world, and consequently sought the glory of being it's lord. "Hebrew speakers, similarly, may have connected the name 'Beelsebul' with the Hebrew zebel='dung'. But in its four Old Testament occurrences (1st Kings 8:13; Isaiah 63:15; Hab 3:11; Psalms 49:15) and in later Hebrew zebul comes to mean 'abode', and this etymology would fit Matt 10:25, 'if they have called the head of the household Beelzebub...' This interpretation also goes well with the continuation of our passage, which speaks of the earth as Satan's house; Satan, then, would be 'Lord of the Household' as 'the ruler of this world'." (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 272).



The Israelites were not immune to Baal worship. There are many cases where they participated in worshipping Baal, and times when they even adopted him to be their God.



Wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel (Jeze-Baal), actually built temples and altars to Baal throughout the land. It was the priests of Baal that Elijah contended with. The Old Testament records, "And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed. And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back? And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Is it not because there

is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." (2nd Kings 1:2-6).

Baal was such an imitator of the truth that eventually temples were built unto him. These temple had striking resemblance to the temple of the true God of Heaven. Upon closer examination, one will find that "Baal" worship consisted of small portions of the truth, mingled with the false and prideful doctrines of Satan. In this chapter, Satan is confusing the minds of those around Jesus. Many were in a state of apostasy, meaning that they were greatly influenced by false doctrines and evil spirits. Satan manages to accuse Jesus of performing miracles by the power of Satan, making Him out as a servant of Satan; while maintaining the misguided Pharisees as righteous followers of God. To protect their position the Pharisees exclaim, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub! That is the solution to their problem, and from their standpoint it is a good one. Since the miracle cannot be denied, the alternative is to say it was wrought by Satanic power, that Satan cast out Satan, that the prince of devils said to an underling in his kingdom, Depart hence. This would even explain the opened eyes and the unstopped ears, for if Jesus operated by evil power, then all that he did was morally wrong." (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 144).



This was not the only example of this tact being used by Satan. He maintains the use of calling evil good and good evil throughout the ages. "But if you look still further,

and seek to find uniformity in that age of the world, follow the disciples when they left Jerusalem to go forth with the proclamation of the Gospel, and we find wherever they went, they were considered insane, mad, and possessed of devils. It was said of Jesus their master, he was leagued with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And, said the Saviour, 'If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?' Wherever they went, then, they were called Nazarites, and Christians was an odious name in that age. They were hooted at by the Jews, pointed at by the Gentiles, and scoffed at by the world; if you seek for testimony in that age of the world, was it for or against them?" (Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, Jedediah M. Grant, August 7, 1853, page 345). Satan's ploy is working in the hearts of many. It works because it appeal to the pride of the natural man. It teaches man what he wants to hear rather than what he needs to hear. President John Taylor said, "That is what the enemies of Jesus said about him; it was not because he was good; you never saw a religious persecution got up on that account, all such persecutions have been 'because of the wickedness of the people.' the Scribes and Pharisees, after seeing Jesus heal the blind man, said - "Give God the glory, for we know this man is a sinner, it is true that he cast out devils, but he does it through Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Well, if they persecuted the Lord of the house, they will persecute the members of his household; if they do these things in the green tree, what will they do in the dry? The fact is, there is, and always has been, and always will be, an antagonism between truth and error, light and darkness, between the servants of God and the servants of the adversary. The devil is called the father of lies, and he delights therein. What difference does that make to us, what do we care about it? Very little. But suppose we are oppressed. We have stood it before and we can stand it again. Suppose they should pass proscriptive laws against us. All right, if the nation can stand it we can. I will risk upholding and standing by correct principles which emanate from God. We will cleave to truth, honor, holiness, and to all the principles that God has revealed to us, and we will go on increasing in every good." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 17, John Taylor, February 1, 1874, page 5).

The Romans & Greeks expanded on the concept of Baal. While their Baal was derived from the Greek God "Belos", whom the Romans called Zeus, they added many false Gods which they worshipped in similar fashion. Eusebius writes of sacrifices being offered to the God Pluto. He records, " 'But it is not without reason that we suspect the wicked daemons to be subject to Sarapis, nor from being persuaded only by the symbols, but because all the sacrifices for propitiating or averting their influence are offered to Pluto, as we showed in the first book. But this god is the same as Pluto, and for this reason especially rules over the daemons, and grants tokens for driving them away.' " (Praeparatio Evangelica [Preparation for the Gospel], Eusebius of Caesarea, Translated by E.H. Gifford 1903, Book 4, Chapter 23, verse 1).

Sadly, today's world worships Baal in many forms and styles. The war that started with the council in heaven continues today. Satan and his followers are still seeking to destroy the agency of man. They seek power and glory. We should not be deceived. They are real, and the stakes are high. Even so, we must remember that Jehovah triumphed over Satan in the pre-mortal realm. Michael the archangel, who we know to be Adam, led the host of heaven under the direction of Jehovah. They cast Satan and his followers out of heaven. The last days will conclude in similar fashion. Jehovah will bind Satan and usher in the Millennium. The Dead Sea Scrolls offer an interesting passage on this subject. It reads, "Such was to be the course of the War in its earthly dimensions. But it would possess in addition a cosmic quality. The hosts of the sons of Light, commanded by the 'Prince of the Congregation', were to be supported by the angelic armies led by the 'Prince of Light', also known in the Scrolls as the archangel Michael.... Similarly, the 'ungodly of the Covenant' and their Gentile associates were to be aided by the demonic forces of Satan, or Belial, or Melkiresha'. These two opposing camps were to be evenly matched, and God's intervention alone would bring about the destruction of evil (IQM XVIII, 1-3). Elsewhere the grand finale is represented as a judgement scene in which the heavenly prince Melchizedek recompenses 'the Holy Ones of God' and executes 'the vengeance of the judgements of God' over Belial and his lot (IIQMelch II, 9, 13). Yet, if my interpretation of another non-messianic composition (4Q246) is correct, the symbolical opponent, usurping in this writing the title 'son of God' and 'son of the Most High', is said to be overcome by 'the people of God' ready to establish with the help of the Great God an eternal kingdom." (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 117).

Until such time as Jesus returns, in glory and power, we must expect that Satan will propagate his lies and deceptions. President Wilford Woodruff wrote, "It is so with regard to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days. If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, will they not say the same of his household? They said that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, they said he was a pestilent fellow and a stirrer-up of sedition and strife, still he was the Savior of the world." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, Wilford Woodruff, December 12, 1869, page 161). We, the faithful members of the Lord's church, must prepare ourselves for the opposition that Satan will surely provide.

- 6- **prince** – The word "prince" is translated from the Greek word "ἄρχων" or "archōn". It means a ruler, commander, chief, or leader. Satan is a usurper. He desires the titles that were rightfully given to Jehovah. He wishes to be called Lord, and Jehovah is the Lord of Hosts. He wishes to be called prince, as Jehovah is the Prince of Peace. Even so, he is only chief among the fallen and rebellious. "He is dubbed 'the chief of the evil spirits', and in the Greek version of Jubilees 17:16 he is called *ho archon ton daimonion*, 'the ruler of the demons', exactly as Beelzebub is in Mark 3:22." (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 272). That being said, Marcus does not see the similarities between Beelzebub and Satan. He wrote, "In Mark's interpretation Beelzebub = 'the ruler of the demons' = Satan, though outside of the New Testament Beelzebub is not attested as synonym for Satan." (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 272). To that I would say, the commonalities are far too significant to say otherwise. Baal worship has too many false imitations of celestial patterns to say otherwise.



michael subdues lucifer in the war in heaven



- 7 - **Jesus** – The name “Jesus” is translated from the Greek word “Ἰησοῦς” or “Iēsous”. The name literally means “Jehovah is salvation”. The Greek version of the name is a transliteration of the Hebrew name “יהושוע” or “Yehowshuwa”. The Latinized equivalent of “Joshua” or “Jehoshua”, which also means “Jehovah is salvation”.

Jesus was and is the opposite of Satan. They stand on opposing sides of Good and Evil. Ironically, the wicked Jews saw Jesus as wicked and themselves as good. **“They regarded Jesus, as not only temporarily, but permanently, possessed by a demon, that is, as the constant vehicle of Satanic influence. And this demon was, according to them, none other than Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Thus in their view, it was really Satan who acted in and through Him; and Jesus, instead of being recognized as the Son of God, was regarded as an incarnation of Satan; instead of being owned as the Messiah, was denounced and treated as the representative of the Kingdom of Darkness. All this, because the Kingdom which He came to open, and which He preached, was precisely the opposite of what they regarded as the Kingdom of God.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 575).

- 8 - **knew their thoughts** – The word “thoughts” is translated from the Greek word “ἐνθύμησις” or “enthymēsis”. It means a thinking, consideration or thoughts.

One of the characteristic of God is omnipotence. He is all knowing. Such a trait is unheard of among mortal men. Even so, God knows the past, present and future of all things as though they stood before Him. It is difficult for us to even imagine what that would be like. He explains in the Doctrine and Covenants, referring to those who are exalted unto Him, **“But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 130:7).

Jesus, whose mortal Father was God the Father, inherited divine attributes from His Father. Additionally, He honed those divine characteristics through exact obedience to eternal laws. As He obeyed the spirit, the workings of the spirit expanded in Him. He thinned the veil between mortality and heaven through righteousness. Consequently, Jesus had insight to know the future and the hearts and minds of men. This was in fact, fulfillment of prophecy. They following was recorded in sacred script;

“Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.” (Psalms 139:2)

“And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts.” (Mosiah 24:12).

“Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart.” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:16).

It is interesting that the Pharisees did not venture to express their thoughts publically. Perhaps that was their intention at some future time, but at this point they were only scheming. Plotting a way to discredit Jesus and elevate their own self satisfying interests. They did not imagine that He would discern their very thoughts. And yet, Jesus used His knowledge to teach. The early church scholar Chrysostom wrote, **“Yet for all that, not even so did Christ despise them, but defends Himself with the forbearance proper to Him, teaching us to be meek to our enemies; and though they say such things, as we are neither conscious of, nor have they any the least probability, nor to be disturbed, nor troubled, but with all longsuffering to render them an account. This then He did most especially on that very occasion, affording the strongest proof, that the things were false that were said by them.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 576).

Jesus calmly puts the Pharisees in their place. He pauses to address their thoughts, and does so in a concise and systematic way. He leaves no doubt as to the incorrectness of their thoughts as He presents six distinct rebuttals to their evil thoughts.

Six Rebuttals to the Pharisees thoughts:

- Rebuttal #1** - A kingdom, or a even a family, that is divided cannot stand, but is destined to fall. The devil does not act against himself, but rather contends with righteousness. Jesus, if acting in the name of the devil, would not assault the devil. That would be self destructive. Surely, Jesus' act of casting out a devil was an act of righteousness and an attack on the devil himself.
- Rebuttal #2** - If Jesus was casting out devils by the power of the devil then by what power did the pious Jews use when they cast out devils? Let them be the judge of Jesus' authority. Since they could not perform the works Jesus did they must either concede that the devil was more powerful than God, or Jesus was indeed a servant of God, even the Messiah.
- Rebuttal #3** - It has long since been prophesied that the Messiah would come and conquer Satan and all of Israel's enemies. The promised Messiah would surely cast out devils. How else can He defeat evil unless He first binds the devil and his followers. Jesus uses the analogy of a stronghold that needed to be toppled. He teaches that the stronghold could not be safely accessed unless the strong man of the house be first bound. This was the role of the Messiah.
- Rebuttal #4** - Be cautious with your thoughts. If the Holy Ghost bears witness of who Jesus is, and you sin against that knowledge, your ability to be forgiven will be revoked. The Pharisees had seen firsthand the power and majesty of the Messiah. There is no doubt that the Holy Ghost was present testifying of Jesus' divinity. Perhaps these Pharisees received a witness that if denied would bring fatal consequences.
- Rebuttal #5** - Jesus declares that before you judge Him as a servant of the devil, consider the works He has performed. We all know that corrupt trees don't bring forth good fruit. Likewise, good trees don't bring forth corrupt fruit. We have seen and heard of the good works Jesus performed, and now how can we judge Him as a corrupt man?
- Rebuttal #6** - Use caution in your words. Jesus knows your thoughts and if you declare them you should be prepared to be judged according to them.

Chrysostom provides a nice conclusion to this footnote. He wrote, **“For, in truth, both because of the exceeding impudence of such a suspicion, and because of the fear of the multitude, they durst not publically make these charges, but were turning them in their mind. But He, to shew them that He knew all that likewise, doth not set down the accusation, nor doth He expose their wickedness; but the refutation He adds, leaving it to the conscience of them that had said it to convict them. For on one thing only was He bent, to do good to them that were sinning, not to expose them.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 577).

- 9 - **kingdom** – The word “kingdom” is translated from the Greek word “βασιλεία” or “basileia”. It means a royal power, kingship, dominion, rule, or territory subject to the rule of a king.

Jesus is the King of Kings. His kingdom is not of this world. This world is teletial in nature and lacks the glory and perfection of the Lord's kingdom. Even so, this fallen world is a proving ground for those who would live eternally in the Lord's kingdom. As such, the Lord established His church upon the earth to help prepare us for exaltation. The scriptures often refer to the church as the kingdom of God on earth. While the earth remains in a fallen teletial state, Satan and his fallen angels are here. Presumptively, they refer to this

world as their kingdom, and refer to Satan as its king. This supports **“the Jewish apocalyptic notion that the evil spirits exist in organized bands under the leadership of a demonic ‘prince’ ”** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 273), the prince of evil; Satan.

- 10 - divided** – The word “divided” is translated from the Greek word “μερίζω” or “merizō”. It means to divide, to separate into parts, cut into pieces, or split into factions.

The Lord has repeatedly instructed that if we are not one (united in our thoughts, desired, and actions), we are not His. Without Him we will surely fail. With Him there is nothing we cannot do. Division is the main cause of failure. Jesus is never divided. **“If he be divided, he is become weaker, and is ruined; and if he be ruined, how can he cast out another?”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 578).

This principle carries into the details of everyday life. Our friendships are strengthened with unity, and crumble when we are divided. It works that way for families, neighbors, communities, peoples and nations. It works that way in righteous organizations as well as the wicked ones. Unity is a requirement for God’s kingdom. **“And we must be united and must operate together, as far as in our power lies, to bring to pass the purposes of the Almighty, because righteousness, and peace and harmony must dwell in the kingdom. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Is a reformation needed amongst the Saints? Yes, it is needed with us all. We must reform and continue to reform. We have inherited lies from, and are full of the traditions of, the fathers. We have all imbibed errors in our infant years, and the enemy is on the alert, ready to enter in and to lead into by and forbidden paths the footsteps of the young, that he may cause them to make shipwreck of their faith and go away from the truth, the eternal truth of heaven.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 18, Daniel H. Wells, October 7, 1875, pages 98-99).



Satan wants disunity among God’s children. At the same time, Satan has organized and unified the powers of evil to fight against God. Though inherently evil, Satan is not divided in his work. He and his followers are united in their rebellion and their goal of destroying our divine future.

The idea that Jesus was working for Satan, while at the same time casting out devils is contradictory. **“If he was casting out devils by the help of the prince of devils, it could only mean that in the demonic kingdom there was schism. If the prince of devils was actually lending his power to the destruction of his own demonic agents, then there was civil war in the kingdom of evil, and that kingdom was doomed. Neither a house nor a city nor a district can remain strong when it is divided against itself. Dissension within is the end of power. Even if the Scribes and Pharisees were right, Satan’s days were numbered.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 39-40).

- 11 - against itself** – The word “against” is translated from the Greek word “κατά” or “kata”. It means down from, throughout, according to, toward, or along. The word “itself” is translated from the Greek word “ἑαυτοῦ” or “heautou”. It means himself, herself, itself, or themselves. **“Satan is not divided against himself anymore than angelic ministrants of the Lord are rebelling against each other. Hence the fact that Jesus did in reality cast out devils, as was evident to the Pharisees and all the people, establishes that he operated in harmony with ‘the Spirit of God’ and that ‘the kingdom of God,’ which is the true Church, had come forth again among men.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, pages 268-269).

- 12 - brought** – The word “brought” appears to be implied in the translation. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the passage “is brought to desolation” as “is made desolate” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 25, page 30). This infers the eternal connection between choice and consequence. We understand that all blessings are predicated upon the keeping of the commandment for which it is associated. We also understand that there are consequences associated with disobedience. These consequences are inescapable. Jesus teaches that spiritual division results in desolation.

- 13 - desolation** – The word “desolation” is translated from the Greek word “ἐρημόω” or “erēmoō”. It means to make desolate, lay waste, to ruin, bring into desolation, to despoil one or strip her of her treasures. In a spiritual sense, desolation is being stripped of eternal blessings and progression. This is the state of those that refuse to unite with Jesus. Uniting with Him requires that we unite with others who have chosen to follow Jesus. Conversely, **“if they stand one against another, their strength is wasted and destroyed.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 577).



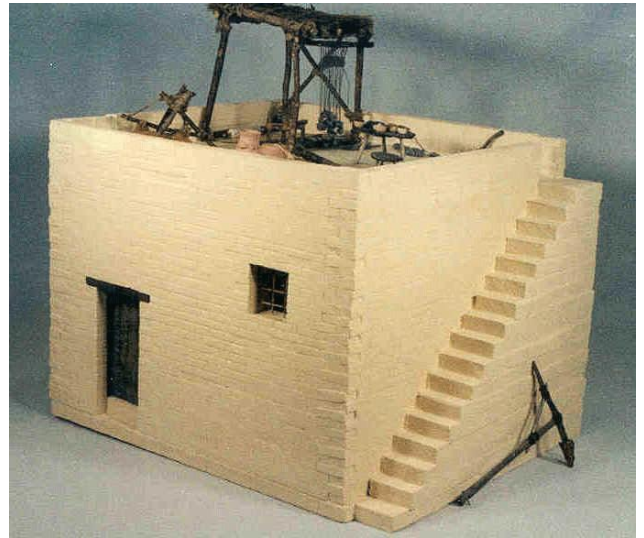
Often the divisions we create amongst ourselves are more damaging than the attacks from our worst enemies. Together we can endure even the greatest of calamities. Alone we are left to despair. Chrysostom wrote, **“For the wars from without are not so ruinous as the civil ones. Yea, and this is the case in bodies too; it is the case even in all things; but for this time He takes His illustration from those that are more publicly known.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 577).

- 14 - every city** – The word “city” is translated from the Greek word “πόλις” or “polis”. It means a city, as in one’s native city or the city in which one lives. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “every” as “no” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 25, page 30). **“This of course included the territory around the city”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 155).

The term “city” is a symbol for people. The phrase, “every city” carries the idea that Jesus’ words apply to “all” people. This may have been significant because the Jews believed that they were the children of Abraham and would be saved through His covenant by simply being a descendant. While it is true that Abraham was promised that his seed would be blessed, they had forgotten that covenants are binding when we do what the Lord prescribed for the covenant. We are not saved simply because our ancestors made and kept a covenant. We too must make and keep that same covenant.

- 15 - house** – The word “house” is translated from the Greek word “οἶκος” or “oikia”. It means a house, an inhabited edifice, a dwelling, or a family. It can also be used figuratively for property, wealth and goods. The imagery of the house symbolizes **“the world center, the sheltering aspect of the Great Mother; an enclosing symbol; protection. It represents the descent into darkness before rebirth.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 86). **“House can also mean family or clan.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 155).

Many scholars and artists have depicted this passage as a literal house, often falling because it has developed a dividing crack in its walls. It is more likely that Jesus is referring to the divisions that take place between people. The term house refers to a “**group of people living together in one house, usually members of the same family; oikia, then, can be equivalent to ‘family’.** On our text’s alternation between a dominion’s stability and that of a household, in which God through a prophet says that he will build for his faithful priest a ‘sure house’, i.e. an uninterrupted chain of descendants.” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 273).



The head of the household of Heaven is Jesus Christ under the direction of His Father. Since the beginning of mortality here on earth, Satan has asserted himself as the Lord of the earth and head of the household of God. “**The displacement of God by Satan as the head of the household in the present passage is in line with Mark’s (and Jesus’) apocalyptic view of the world as fallen under the dominion of demonic powers.**” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 274). We should not be confused. Satan is only the head of the household of sin. He has no authority outside of that which we give him through sin.

During our sojourn on earth, we are tasked with maintaining ourselves in the household of God. This is accomplished, for the most part, through individual effort and the efforts of our earthly family. Those of us that have applied ourselves to this task soon realize that we cannot accomplish it alone. President Monson taught, “**In a very real sense, we are builders of eternal houses. We are apprentices to the trade—not skilled craftsmen. We need divine help if we are to build successfully. The words of instruction provided by the Apostle Paul give the assurance we need: ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’**” (General Conference, “Your Eternal Home”, Thomas S. Monson, April 2000).

- 16 - **shall not stand** – The word “stand” is translated from the Greek word “ἵστημι” or “histēmi”. It means to cause or make to stand, to place, put or set. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the passage “shall not stand” as “shall stand” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 25, page 30).

The symbolic meaning behind standing is victory, endurance, and pride. It is the opposite of laying down, which represents defeat, destruction, humility, and death. Divided kingdoms cannot stand, in other words they will fall in defeat. “**Jesus had no difficulty in exploding that argument. The essence of exorcism has always been that the exorcist calls to his aid some stronger power to drive out the weaker demon. So Jesus says: ‘Just think! If there is internal dissension in a kingdom, that kingdom cannot last. If there are quarrels in a house, that house will not endure long. If Satan is actually making war with his own demons then he is finished as an effective power, because civil war has begun in the kingdom of Satan.’**” (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 78).

- 17 - **Satan** – The word “Satan” is translated from the Greek word “Σατανᾶς” or “Satanas”. It means an adversary; a title given to anyone who opposes another in purpose or act. It is therefore commonly used of the prince of evil spirits; the inveterate adversary of God and Jesus. Elder McConkie wrote that the name Satan is “**literally, adversary, a formal Hebrew name for the devil, which signifies that he wages open war with the truth and all who obey its principles.**” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 269).

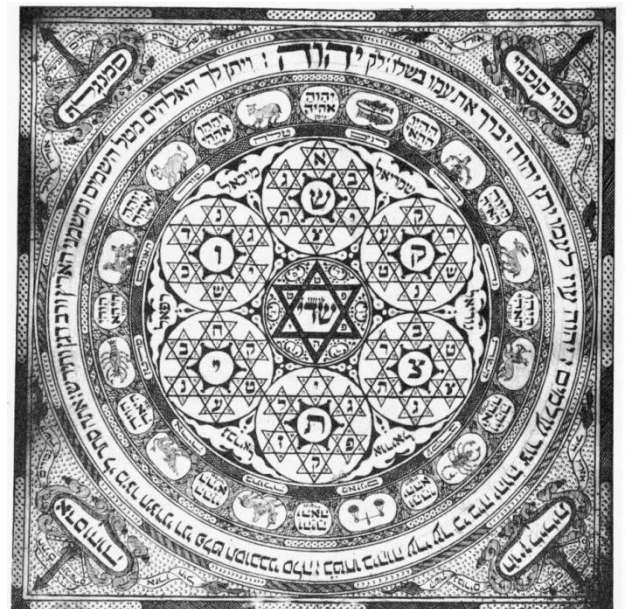
- 18 - **against himself** – The word “against” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπί” or “epi”. It means upon, on, at, by or before. It can also mean to, over, on, at, across, or against.

The world we live in, and the world at the time of Jesus, is built upon dishonesty, deception and self gratification. We have developed a culture that believes in varying degrees of right and wrong. The delineations between good and evil have been purposefully clouded by Satan and those that follow him. Many seek not after righteousness, but rather live by the false belief that they can sin and need only to be good enough. They believe that there is light, dark, and multiple shades of grey. They also believe that those individuals who choose to act somewhere in the middle will have a chance to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is false doctrine. “**There are no neutrals where Christ is concerned. All men are either for him or against him. Those who are not for him, who do not take an affirmative stand in his behalf, by virtue of that fact standing alone are in reality against him.**” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 269).

As we make our way through mortality, we must remain loyal to the covenants we have made and the commandments we have been charged to follow. Additionally, we must give strict heed to the representatives God has authorized to lead us. President Hinckley said, “**Loyalty to leadership is a cardinal requirement of all who serve in the army of the Lord. A house divided against itself cannot stand. (See Mark 3:25.) Unity is basic and essential. Declared the Lord, ‘if ye are not one ye are not mine.’ (D&C 38:27.) Failure to sustain those in authority is incompatible with service in the temple.**” (General Conference, “Keeping the Temple Holy”, Gordon B. Hinckley, April 1990).

- 19 - **your children** – The word “children” is translated from the Greek word “υἱός” or “huios”. It means a son, and is rarely used for animals but reserved for the offspring of men. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “children” as “sons”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 27, page 30). Albright clarifies the passage as “**i.e. ‘you, your people’.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 155).

The apostate “children” of Abraham still considered themselves the chosen people of the Lord. In spite of the fact that they had broken their covenants, and lost their way, they practiced what they believed to be the true and everlasting religion. In this midst of the mess they created of the religion God instituted, they did on occasion have a need to cast out or exorcise an evil spirit. Having lost the priesthood rites, they turned to black magic and mystical incantations. Elder McConkie wrote, “**Sectarian commentators, almost universally, have assumed that by exorcism, magic, or incantation of some sort the false religionists of Christ’s day were able to cast out devils. With nothing but the King James Version before them it should be evident that this conclusion is absurd and illogical, for the whole tenor of this passage is that Satan cannot cast out Satan. But from the Inspired Version we learn that those others**



of the Jews who were casting out devils were persons who has gained the Spirit of God, that is they had been baptized, were members of the Church, held the priesthood, and were walking uprightly and faithfully before the Father. False ministers have not, do not, will not, and cannot cast out devils.” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 269).

20 - **your judges** – The word “judges” is translated from the Greek word “κρίτης” or “kritēs”. It means one who passes or arrogates to himself, or judgment on anything. It is used for arbiters, leaders or ruler of the Israelites, Roman procurators, or God passing judgment on men.

Judges in ancient Israel were far different than those in our legal systems. First of all, Jewish law was the scriptures. There was no separation between church and state. In fact, the church was the Jewish state. Judges were selected from local communities to serve as the elders of the people. These men were selected by the people based on moral character, knowledge of the law, and reputation. They formed a judging council called a “Sanhedrin”. These councils were mostly comprised of good men, though by the time of Jesus the Pharisees had their own members in most Sanhedrim. The great Sanhedrin was a different story. It was similar to our high court. It was comprised of 70 men, an “Av bat din” and a “Nasi” (making it 72 members). At the time of Jesus, the Sanhedrin became offices of political appointments. The Jewish aristocrats managed to comprise much of the council. The Pharisees also took their share of seats.

Jesus was inviting the Pharisees to judge the manner of His exorcism. Surely the elders of Capernaum (the probable location for this chapter) would have experience with past evil spirits. They would recognize the divine miracle that Jesus performed without linking it to Satan.



21 - **the spirit of God** – The word “spirit” is translated from the Greek word “πνεῦμα” or “pneuma”. It is generally used to refer to the third person in the God head; the Holy Ghost. It can also be used in reference to the spirit that resides in any man. Joseph Smith translated this section of scripture as follows; “... you. For they also cast out devils by the Spirit of God, for unto them is given power over devils, that they may cast them out.” (Joseph Smith Inspired Translation for Matthew 12:23).

22 - **Kingdom of God** – The word “God” is translated from the Greek word “θεός” or “theos”. It means a god or goddess. It is a general title for deity or divinities. It can be used for any member of the Godhead; the Father, the Son or the Holy Ghost. “The expressions “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are used in the scriptures with different meanings which have to be determined by the nature of the thought expressed. Oft times they are used to convey the same meaning; that is to say, the expression ‘kingdom of God’ may refer to the Church on earth, or the kingdom of heaven, and then again to the universal political kingdom as referred to by President Brigham Young. This kingdom will embrace all the people on the earth who remain after the coming of Christ, and the cleansing of the earth from its wickedness. ‘Kingdom of heaven’ may also have reference to the church or to the kingdom of heaven.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 2, Section 5, page 19).

Matthew is using the term “Kingdom of God”, at least in this instance, as a reference to the abode of God the Father. “The term occurs only four times in Matthew, and though the phrase is synonymous in Hebrew usage with ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ we have seen reason to find in Matthew a careful differentiation of meaning. ‘Kingdom of God’ in the Matthean tradition is applied to the Father’s reign after the judgment of the End, and ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ to the continuing community of the Man, lasting up to the time of the judgment.” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 155).

23 - **come unto you** – The word “come” is translated from the Greek word “φθάνω” or “phthanō”. It means to come before, precede, anticipate, arrive at, reach or attain to. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “unto” as “upon”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 28, page 30). “The Greek verb phthanein occurs only here and in Luke xi 20 in the synoptic gospels; it is a dramatically strong word.” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 156).



The coming of the Kingdom of God is a clear image of the arrival of the promised Messiah. Jesus was making the bold claim that He was the Redeemer that all the prophets had foretold. Not only was He declaring Himself the Messiah, but that He was specifically sent unto them. Not recognizing the Messiah, especially for an expert in the Law, would have been a significant embarrassment. Chrysostom writes, “Then, to conciliate them, He said not simply, The Kingdom is come, but, unto you; as though He had said, To you the good things are come; wherefore then feel displeased at your proper blessings? Why war against your own salvation?” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 579).

To make matters even worse, Jesus places the Pharisees in a catch 22. If their thoughts were correct and He was casting out spirits in the devil’s name they must then consider that their own people cast our spirits by the same power. Heaven forbid that the Pharisees would associate with Beelzebub. On the other hand, if it is the power of God that Jesus was using, and His works were greater than any man, they must consider Him to be their promised Messiah. Both scenarios were beyond anything they were willing to admit. “In effect, Jesus said to the Pharisees, If I am using the devil’s power to cast out evil spirits, by whom are your followers doing it? If, on the other hand, I am doing those miraculous acts using God’s power, that is a clear sign to you that the kingdom of God is come unto you.” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 273).

Another interesting point is that the Pharisees would never concede that the devil was mightier than their God. If Jesus was performing miracles in greater magnitude than the Pharisees or any other Jew, and doing it by the power of the devil, that would be evidence that the devil was mightier than the God of the Jews. This would never be a consideration for a faithful Pharisee. Their argument was poor at best.

The bottom line was; the Messiah came and the people were faced with a decision. “C. S. Lewis spoke of a similar dilemma faced by someone who must choose whether to accept or reject the Savior’s divinity—where there is likewise no middle ground: ‘I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. ... You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or

else a madman or something worse. ... But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.' (General Conference, "The Book of Mormon – A Book from God", Tad R. Callister, October 2011).

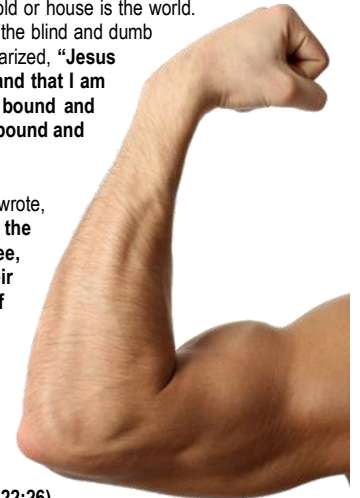
- 24 - **how can one enter** – The word "enter" is translated from the Greek word "εἰσερχομαι" or "eiserchomai". It means to go out or come in; to enter. It can be used metaphorically of the entrance into any condition, state of things, society, or employment. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "how can one enter" as "how can anyone enter". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 29, page 30).

We now move to rebuttal number three. Jesus uses the analogy of a stronghold that was being conquered. He explains that the invaders would not start sacking the stronghold until the strong man, or defender of the hold be adequately subdued. **"For that Satan cannot possibly cast out Satan is evident from what hath been said; but that neither in any other way is it possible to cast him out, except one first get the better of him, this too is acknowledged by all."** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 580).

- 25 - **Strong man** – The term "Strong man" is translated from the Greek word "ἰσχυρός" or "ischyros". It means mighty or strong. It can be used of living beings who are strong either in body or mind. **"In Semitic languages indefinite nouns and adjectives sometimes take the definite article, so that the putative Aramaic original may have simply meant 'the house of a strong person'."** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 274).

In this rebuttal to the Pharisees, Jesus offers a short analogy. The strong man in the story represents Satan. The implied strong hold or house is the world. The spoils represent the things that Satan and his servants control or possess. In a very real sense, the spoils were represented by the blind and dumb man that was possessed by the devil. Before the spoils could be recovered, the strong man needed to be subdued. Barclay summarized, **"Jesus said, 'If I am casting out devils--and that you do not, and cannot, deny--it means that I have invaded the territory of Satan, and that I am actually like a burglar despoiling his house. Clearly no one can get into a strong man's house until the strong man is bound and rendered helpless. Therefore the very fact that I have been able so successfully to invade Satan's territory is proof that he is bound and powerless to resist.'"** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 43).

Many have insinuated that Jesus' strong man analogy has roots in Old Testament scripture. They point specifically to Isaiah who wrote, **"Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."** (Isaiah 49:24-26). In Isaiah's prophetic message, the mighty (strong man) has taken captive the children of the household and the Savior and Redeemer would be sent to redeem them. This is obviously Jesus' role. Jesus could not free us unless He first overcame the strong man. In other words, Jesus was only qualified to be the Redeemer after He overcame Satan and sin. Many would argue that He accomplished this during his forty day fast after His baptism, where He resisted all of Satan's temptations. Others argue that Jesus did not fully accomplish this feat until He worked out all the details of His atoning sacrifice. Some argue that Satan was defeated after His rebellion prior to our mortality. Finally, there are those that say Satan will not be fully bound until Jesus returns in His glory prior to the Millennial reign. Ogden and Skinner write, **"How could the Savior overcome Satan's kingdom without having already overcome Satan himself (the 'strong man')? Satan ultimately will be bound (Revelation 20:2; 1 Nephi 22:26) and his 'house' permanently spoiled and leveled."** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 274).



Regardless of when Jesus officially and fully defeats, or defeated, Satan, we can rest assured of His victory. It is a victory that frees us as the spoils of the devil. Albright wrote, **"There is here a striking commentary, in terms of the Messiah's vocation, on Isaiah xlix 24-26. The very proclamation of the Kingdom was a victory over demonic forces, and the Messiah was gathering the fruits of that victory."** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 156).

- 26 - **Wherefore I say unto you** – The term "I say" is translated from the Greek word "λέγω" or "legō". It means to say or speak. It can also be used to mean teach, exhort, command or direct. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "wherefore I say unto you" as "For this reason I say to you". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 31, page 30).

- 27 - **Spoil** – The word "Spoil" is translated from the Greek word "δίαρπάζω" or "diarpazō". It means to plunder. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word "spoil" in the first part of verse 29 as "sieve" and in the last part of verse 29 as "plunder". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 29, page 30).

The spoils are representative of the mortal souls that Satan has taken through sin and folly. They are us. As all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so are we all spoils of the devil. The implication that the Lord will spoil Satan's house makes reference to the redemption of mankind. Such a redemption was only possible through Jesus because He lived worthy of the authority to do so by His Father. **"And He said not, He will take away, but, He will spoil, to express what is done with authority."** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 580).

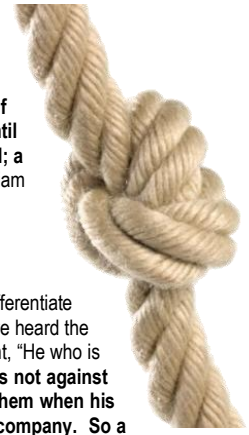
Jesus' act of casting out a devil was just the beginning of the great work of redemption. **"Christ had attacked the stronghold of Satan, had driven his evil spirits from the human tabernacles of which they had unwarrantably taken possession; how could Christ have done this had He not first subdued the "strong man," the master of devils, Satan himself? And yet those ignorant scholars dared to say in the face of such self-evident refutation of their own premises, that the powers of Satan were subdued by Satanic agency. There could be no agreement, no truce nor armistice between the contending powers of Christ and Satan."** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 193).

- 28 - **his goods** – The word "goods" is translated from the Greek word "σκεῦος" or "skeuos". It means a vessel, and is used in reference to household utensils and domestic gear. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word "goods" as "instruments". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 29, page 30).

The goods of Satan, like the spoils, refer to fallen mortal men, those who through sin have subjected themselves to the strong man (Satan).

- 29 - **except** – The word "except" is translated from the Greek word "ἐὰν μή" or "ean mē". It means if not, unless, whoever, or not. It is mostly translated in the New Testament as except. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word "except" as "unless". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 29, page 30).

30 - bind – The word “bind” is translated from the Greek word “δέω” or “deō”. It means to bind, tie, fasten, fasten with chains, or to throw into chains. It is used metaphorically of covenants, obligations, duty and law. The word bind is closely associated with the symbol of the knot. The knot symbolizes covenants and binding promises. Satan is bound by adherence to the covenants made possible by the atonement of Jesus Christ, by making and keeping sacred covenants. Sacred covenants would be of no value if they had not been made sacred through Jesus’ sacrifice. Likewise, we are utterly dependant on Jesus for freedom from Satan. Barclay wrote, speaking of freedom from Satan, **“You have no hope of doing so until you have got the strong man under subjection. Once you have got him tied up you can plunder his goods—but not until then. The defeat of the demons did not show that Jesus was in alliance with Satan; it showed that Satan’s defenses had been breached; a stronger name had arrived; the conquest of Satan had begun.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 78).



31 - with me – The word “with” is translated from the Greek word “μετά” or “meta”. It means with, after, and behind.

Unity is one of the fundamental characteristics of God. The Godhead is so united that they act and one, speak as one, and are often difficult to differentiate when they speak. On more than one occasion, Jesus taught that if you have seen Him, you have seen the Father; if you have heard Him, you have heard the Father. This same unity is required from us if we are to obtain the blessings that He has in store for us. It is therefore no surprise that Jesus taught, “He who is not with me is against me”. This **“presents us with a problem, for both Mark and Luke have a saying which is the very reverse, ‘He that is not against us is for us’ (Mark 9:40; Luke 9:50). But they are not so contradictory as they seem. It is to be noted that Jesus spoke the second of them when his disciples came and told him that they had sought to stop a man from casting out devils in his name, because he was not one of their company. So a wise suggestion has been made. ‘He that is not with me is against me,’ is a test that we ought to apply to ourselves. Am I truly on the Lord’s side, or, am I trying to shuffle through life in a state of cowardly neutrality? ‘He that is not against us is for us,’ is a test that we ought to apply to others. Am I given to condemning everyone who does not speak with my theology and worship with my liturgy and share my ideas? Am I limiting the Kingdom of God to those who think as I do?”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 45).

32 - against me – The word “me” is translated from the Greek word “ἐμοῦ” or “emou”. It means me, my, and mine.

Being against the Lord is not limited to open rebellion. There are many that stand against the Lord by simply doing nothing. The old adage that evil prospers when good men do nothing. Allowing sin to prevail is against the work of the Lord. The Pharisees fit somewhere between these extremes. The sat idly by while evil prevailed around them. They also actively engaged in changing God’s law to conform to their own selfish and self-serving desires. Chrysostom explained, **“But to me He (Jesus) seems here to be hinting also at the Jews, setting them on the devil’s side. For they too were against Him, and were scattered what He gathered. As to the fact that He was hinting at them also, He declared it by speaking thus, ‘Therefore I say unto you, that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.’ ”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 581).

33 - gathereth not – The word “gathered” is translated from the Greek word “συνάγω” or “synagō”. It means to gather together, assemble, or collect.

Jesus typically taught using symbols and associations that His audience could relate to. Since most of the people were farmers and herdsman, many parables and analogies centered on agriculture and the care of animals. **“The picture of gathering and scattering may come from either of two backgrounds. It may come from harvesting; he who is not sharing in gathering the harvest is scattering the grain abroad, and is therefore losing it to the wind. It may come from shepherding; he who is not helping to keep the flock safe by bringing it into the fold is driving it out to the dangers of the hills.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 44).

Grain was harvested and taken to threshing floors. There the grain was separated from the chaff by threshing the harvest. The threshing floor is a symbol for mortality. The chaff, which was light and without substance, would be scattered by the wind. After being threshed, the grain and chaff was cast into the air. The grain would fall to the ground to be gathered by the servants. The grain represents the elect of God, while the chaff represents those that have chosen to follow Satan. The servants are the Lord’s authorized representatives. The Lord’s intentions are to gather His elect unto Him. The analogy points out that the grain is gathered unto the garner. Garners represent the Holy Temples and the fullness of saving ordinances.

Similarly, flocks were gathered to assure their safety. The flocks represent the elect of God. They were gathered by shepherds or herdsman, symbolizing the authorized representatives of the Lord. When one strayed, it was up to the shepherds and herdsman to gather them back to the fold. A stray animal was subject to the dangers of the world. Enemies were known to intentionally scatter flocks so that they could steal the strays.

Those that refuse to gather, encourage the scattering. Satan is associated with the scattering of the Lord’s children. At the same time, one of the purposes of the earth is to gather the elect of God.

34 - scattereth abroad – The phrase “scattereth abroad” is translated from the Greek word “σκοπρίζω” or “skorpizō”. It means to scatter, or to scatter abroad. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “scattereth abroad” as simply “scatters”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 30, page 30). **“W. C. Allen writes: ‘In this war against Satan’s strongholds there are only two sides, for Christ or against him, gathering with him or scattering with Satan.’ ”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 44).

The works of evil have a scattering effect. They divide families, communities, loved ones, and yes even the saints. Sin is always centered in selfishness. It seeks one’s own desires above everything and everyone else. When we sin, it symbolically scatters us from the Lord. This is the fate of those that are against the Lord. The Book of Mormon teaches, **“Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me, saith our God.”** (2nd Nephi 10:16).



35 - All manner of sin – The word “sin” is translated from the Greek word “ἁμαρτία” or “hamartia”. It means to be without a share in, to miss the mark, to err, or be mistaken. The Codex Sinaiticus translates “All manner of sin” as “every sin”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 31, page 30).

36 - blasphemy – The word “blasphemy” is translated from the Greek word “βλασφημία” or “blasphēmia”. It means slander, detract, or speech injurious to another’s good name. It can also mean impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty. **“Blasphemy consists in either or both of the following: 1. Speaking irreverently, evilly, abusively, or**

scurrilously against God or sacred things; or 2. Speaking profanely or falsely about Deity... **Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost – which is falsely denying Christ after receiving a perfect revelation of him from the Holy Ghost – is the unpardonable sin.**" (Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, pages 85-86).



There are so many examples of blasphemy in our modern society that we can easily become numb to them. Satan has infiltrated our society to the point that mocking the things that are most sacred have become popular forms of entertainment. Comedians make money by using blasphemy as a form of humor. In an amazing act of mercy, God allows us to be forgiven of these sins. This mercy was being extended to the Pharisees. Their thoughts were blasphemous and consequently offensive to God, and yet He was willing to forgive them. Amazing.

Even so there are clear words of caution, for blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable. Elder Talmage clarifies, **"He had proved to them on the basis of their own proposition that He, having subdued Satan, was the embodiment of the Spirit of God, and that through Him the kingdom of God was brought to them. They rejected the Spirit of God, and sought to destroy the Christ through whom that Spirit was made manifest. What blasphemy could be greater? Speaking as one having authority, with the solemn affirmation 'I say unto you,' He continued: 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.'**" (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 193).

One might ask, how can the Lord forgive blasphemy against the Father and the Son and withhold such forgiveness from blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said, **"A man who has not received the gift of the Holy Ghost and therefore who has never 'tasted of the heavenly gift', may be guilty of blasphemy against Jesus Christ and be forgiven on his repentance, but so great is the testimony through the gift of the Holy Ghost, should he turn against the Lord and fight his work, there is no forgiveness."** (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 1, Section 16, pages 63-64).

It is noteworthy to mention that the ancient Jews of Jesus' time were sensitive to the blasphemy of others. They viewed the occupying Romans as extreme examples of blasphemy. Edersheim wrote, **"As the seat of the Roman power it was specially hateful to the Jews. Accordingly it is designated as the 'daughter of Edom—the city of abomination and blasphemy,' although the district was, for its riches, called 'the land of life.'"** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 42).

37 - forgiven – The word "forgiven" is translated from the Greek word "ἀφίημι" or "aphiēmi". It means to send away, to divorce, to send forth, yield up, or expire. Jesus' atonement provided an opportunity for all mankind to repent of their sins. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, **"All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition."** (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 358).

The sons of perdition are those that sin against a perfect knowledge. Such knowledge can only be obtained by the Holy Ghost. **"The reason blasphemy against the Son of God may be forgiven, even if the Son be made manifest in a vision or a dream, is that such manifestation does not impress the soul as deeply as does the testimony of the Holy Ghost. The influence of the Holy Ghost is Spirit speaking to spirit, and the indelible impression is one that brings conversion and conviction to the soul as no other influence can. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth with a positiveness wherein there is no doubt and therefore is far more impressive than a vision given to the eyes."** (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 1, Section 18, page 69).

38 - unto men – The phrase "unto men" is translated from the Greek word "ἄνθρωπος" or "anthrōpos". It means a human being, whether male or female. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave some insight into this passage with an inspired translation of the Bible. It reads, **"... unto men who receive me and repent; but ..."** (Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 12:26). Joseph's translation clarifies that forgiveness is dependent upon our receiving Jesus through covenant and repenting in that the very desires of our hearts align with Jesus' will.

39 - blasphemy against the Holy Ghost – The term "Holy Ghost" is translated from the Greek word "πνεῦμα" or "pneuma". It is generally used to refer to the third person in the God head; the Holy Ghost. It can also be used in reference to the spirit that resides in any man. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" as "blasphemy of the Spirit". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 31, page 30).

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a God in every aspect of the term. He is the least understood of the Godhead. We do not know His heavenly name, nor do we know His pre-earth role. His relationship to the Father and the Son are also a mystery, at least to us in mortality. Some have speculated that the Holy Ghost is Adam, which is problematic since we know that the Holy Ghost doesn't have a body. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, **"the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us."** (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22).

As a personage of spirit, the Holy Ghost has a spirit body. The difference between a spirit body and a physical body is a matter of substance. The Lord taught, **"There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter."** (Doctrine & Covenants 131:7-8). We understand that Holy Ghost is a spirit, and therefore has a spirit body that resembles a physical body only more refined. There is no scripture that defines the gender of the Holy Ghost, but most people refer to Him as a He. We must conclude that the Holy Ghost is defined by a gender since the proclamation on the family teaches, **"Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."** Since we assume that the Holy Ghost holds the Priesthood, it would stand to reason that He is male.

We do not know the eternal plan for the Holy Ghost. Many speculate as to when or if the Holy Ghost will receive a physical body. There are questions as to if the Holy Ghost will need to have a mortal experience. All such question cannot be answered at this time. We might only assume that God has a very specific plan that applies even to the Holy Ghost.

While the earth serves as a probationary state for mortal man, the Holy Ghost serves a very specific role for God's children. Many people get confused regarding the role of the Holy Ghost because He has multiple functions. **"According to Jewish teaching the Holy Spirit had two supreme functions. First, the Holy Spirit brought God's truth to**

men; second, the Holy Spirit enabled men to recognize and to understand that truth when they saw it. So then a man, as the Jews saw it, needed the Holy Spirit, both to receive and to recognize God's truth." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 48).

The restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has a fuller understanding of the role of the Holy Ghost. It has not been deemed necessary to reveal many of the details of the character and history of the Holy Ghost, at least not at this time; however, we have been given a clear understanding of His functions. He is the testifier of all truth, specifically of doctrine and those things pertaining to God and our salvation. Related thereto, the Holy Ghost also serves as a guide and teacher as we maneuver through life. As we are receptive to His promptings, He can effectively direct us around the pitfalls of life. He is also the great sanctifier. As we partake of the fruits of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost washes away our sins and cleanses our soul. He brings comfort as we mourn and toil in mortality. Finally, He helps us remember the things of God so that we might make and keep sacred covenants. He even has a vital role in covenants; where He is known as the Holy Spirit of Promise. As we covenant with the Lord, the Holy Ghost binds or seals those covenants. At last, the Holy Ghost is responsible for pronouncing all spiritual gifts upon our heads. These are just a few of His sacred roles.

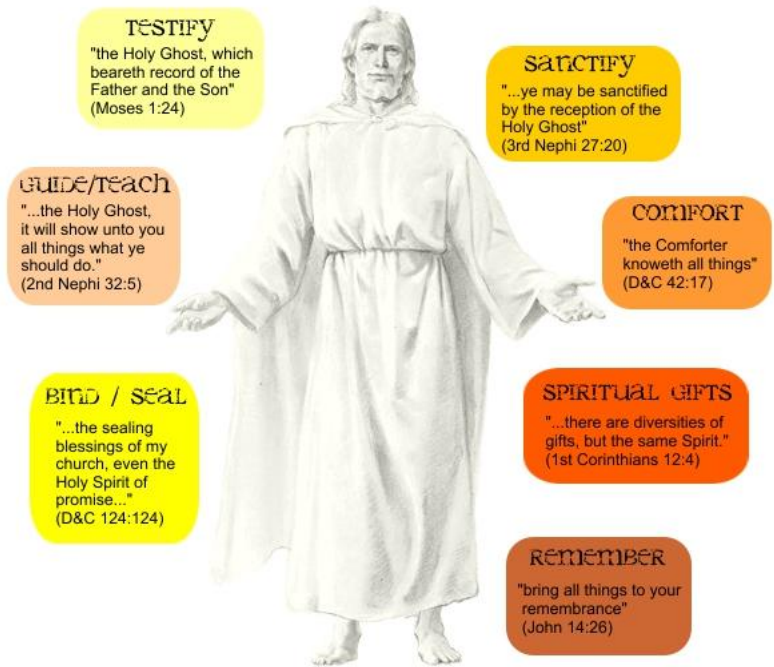
Though we know less about the Holy Ghost, He is the member of the Godhead that we should be the most familiar with. We should interact with Him on a continuous basis, more so than the other two members. He is often referred to as our constant companion; and yet we know him not by sight but by spiritual sense. Perhaps this is why the sin against the Holy Ghost is difficult for many to understand. **"The eyes can be deceived, as can the other physical senses, but the testimony of the Holy Ghost is certain. The sin against the Holy Ghost requires such a knowledge that it is manifestly impossible for the rank and file to commit such a sin."** (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Spencer W. Kimball, page 23).

It is apparent that most sins can be repented of and forgiven. The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is apparently in a special class. It is an unforgivable sin. President Joseph Fielding Smith said, **"Our Savior says, that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men wherewith they shall blaspheme; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, evidently showing that there are sins which may be forgiven in the world to come, although the sin of blasphemy [against the Holy Ghost] cannot be forgiven."** (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 219).

Since most of us can attest to some pretty despicable sins, imagining blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as a sin of greater magnitude than the horrific things we see around us every day is difficult. The logical question is, what makes the sin against the Holy Ghost such a serious sin? President Smith explained, **"Commission of the unpardonable sin consists in crucifying unto ones self the Son of God afresh and putting him to open shame. To commit this unpardonable crime a man must receive the gospel, gain from the Holy Ghost by revelation the absolute knowledge of the divinity of Christ, and then deny 'the new and everlasting covenant by which he was sanctified, calling it an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace.'" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 128). I have heard it compared to looking at the noon day sun on a clear day, and the denying that it existed. This is the level of knowledge that the Holy Ghost must impart to a person for him to be capable of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Elder Talmage taught, **"The nature of the awful sin against the Holy Ghost, against which the Lord warned the Pharisaic accusers who sought to ascribe His divine power to Satan, is more fully explained, and its dread results are more explicitly set forth in modern revelation. Concerning them and their dreadful fate, the Almighty has said:--'I say that it had been better for them never to have been born, for they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity; concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come.... They shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment; and the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows, neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof: nevertheless I, the Lord, show it by vision unto many, but straightway shut it up again; wherefore the end, the width, the height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except them who are ordained unto this condemnation.'" (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 193).****

To sin against the Holy Ghost is to enter into open rebellion against God without any deception or ignorance on the part of the dissenter. Though there are many who act in a rebellious manner towards heaven, only those who do so with perfect knowledge are guilty of this grievous sin. President Smith taught, **"Those in this life who gain a perfect knowledge of the divinity of the gospel cause, a knowledge that comes only by revelation from the Holy Ghost, and who then link themselves with Lucifer and come out in open rebellion, also become sons of perdition. Their destiny, following their resurrection, is to be cast out with the devil and his angels, to inherit the same kingdom in a state where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."** (Doctrines of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith, Volume 1, pages 47-49). On a lighter note, the Lord refrains from giving us a perfect knowledge until such a time that we are capable of bearing the responsibilities thereof. That means that most of us are incapable, at least at the current time, of sinning against the Holy Ghost. The Lord gives us manifestations of the Holy Ghost in piece meal portions according to our spiritual capacity. This protects us from our own folly and pride. A merciful Father has designed a plan that will protect His children from being accountable for knowledge beyond their ability to bear. **"These who are to be so severely punished must first have the testimony of the gospel and by the power of the Holy Ghost know that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God. Afterwards if they sin and openly and willfully turn against the truth and deny Christ, they assent unto his death, and this is equivalent to crucifying him again and the shedding of innocent blood, and they put him to open shame."** (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 1, Section 16, page 63).

ROLES OF THE HOLY GHOST



40 - speaketh a word – The word "speaketh" is translated from the Greek word "εἶπον εἶπον". It means to speak or say. **"It is little wonder that Jesus chose to speak here about the awful responsibility of words. The Scribes and Pharisees had just spoken the most terrible words. They had looked on the Son of God and called him the ally of the devil. Such words were dreadful words indeed."** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 51).

It is an accepted fact that the most danger weapon welded by man is the human tongue. We often use it without discretion or thought. The words we utter have broken hearts, damaged relationships, and hurt the innocent. The words we speak have caused wars, divorces, and schisms between even the best of friend. At the same time, our words can express the kindest thoughts and the most soothing balm.

- 41 - **against the Son of man** – The word “Son” is translated from the Greek word “υἱός” or “huios”. It means a son, and is rarely used for animals but reserved for the offspring of men.

Another name for God is “Man of Holiness”. A common title for Jesus is the “Son of Man”, referring to the first born Son of the Man of Holiness. This is a common title used for the Savior in the scriptures. This title can be confusing because several prophets used the term “son of man” as an expression for mortal men. In this passage, the Savior is using it in reference to Himself.

Jesus is clear that those who blasphemy His name, or speak evil of Him, may be forgiven of that sin should they repent. The only limiting factor to that statement is the Holy Ghost. If a man has been blessed with a sure knowledge that only the Holy Ghost can provide, he losses the ability to be forgiven of such blasphemies. Elder McConkie wrote, **“Let men without this sure knowledge speak even against Christ himself; let them commit all manner of sins and blasphemies, even murder, and yet when the penalties have been paid and a proper repentance granted, men shall come forth in immortality and gain an inheritance in whatever kingdom of glory they merit. Only the sons of perdition shall be cast out eternally to live and reign with Lucifer in hell forever. Such is the mercy and wonder of that eternal plan – the gospel of God, now named after Christ his Son – which a gracious God has provided for all his children.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 148).

- 42 - **speakeh against the Holy Ghost** – The word “Holy” is translated from the Greek word “ἅγιος” or “hagios”. It means a most holy thing, or a Saint. The Codex Sinaiticus translates “Holy Ghost” as “Holy Spirit” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 33, page 30).

During the course of time, there have been a few examples of those that would sin against the Holy Ghost. We refer to such individuals as “sons of perdition”. Perdition is a state of eternal punishment and damnation into which a person who has sinned against the Holy Ghost will inherit. Satan and his followers are sons (and presumably daughters) of perdition. They were taught all the truths of eternity, with full understanding. Lacking nothing, they rebelled against God and sought to destroy His plan.

As mortal men first started to populate the earth, the spirit of the Lord was in abundance. The children of Adam and Eve were not only taught by Adam, the earth’s first prophet, but they were taught from on High. The Book of Moses teaches, **“And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.”** (Moses 5:4). We know that Cain, a son of Adam and Eve, had a pure knowledge of God from the Holy Ghost. He was also accustom to hearing the voice of God. Cain rebelled against this knowledge, and killed his brother. He became a son of perdition. He was willing to kill in open rebellion against God. Those who sin against the Holy Ghost generally rebel in extreme fashion. Elder McConkie explained, **“He thereby commits murder by assenting unto the Lord’s death, that is, having a perfect knowledge of the truth he comes out in open rebellion and places himself in a position wherein he would have crucified Christ knowing perfectly the while that he was the Son of God. Christ is thus crucified afresh and put to open shame.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, pages 273-274).

There is a common statement made by prophets and scholars alike when referring to “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost”. It is the concept that a person guilty of that sin has rebelled to the point that they would be willing to personally order or direct the crucifixion of Jesus had they been given the chance. There is some irony in this chapter since the Pharisees and Sadducees played their part in Jesus’ crucifixion, and Jesus was speaking to a group of Pharisees. The Pharisees were part of the latter movement that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. In either case, sin against the Holy Ghost requires that one not only deny the truth after having it delivered by divine messenger, but they rebel against the truth to such a high degree that they would be willing to commit heinous acts in the process. Elder McConkie recorded, **“There is an unpardonable sin, a sin for which there is no forgiveness, neither in time nor in eternity. It is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; it is to deny Christ, to come out in open rebellion, to make open war against the Son of Man after gaining, by the power of the Holy Ghost, a sure and perfect knowledge of the truth and divinity of the Lord’s work. It is to shed innocent blood, meaning to assent unto the death of Christ – to crucify him afresh, Paul says – with a full and absolute knowledge that he is the Son of God. It is to wage open warfare, as does Lucifer, against the Lord and his Anointed, knowing that the course so pursued is evil. It is to deny – to say the sun does not shine while seeing its blazing light - it is to deny Christ after a sure and irrevocable testimony has been received by the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence, it is a scurrilous and evil declaration against the Holy Ghost, against the sole and only source of absolute and sure knowledge. It is blasphemy against the Holy ghost.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, pages 147-148).

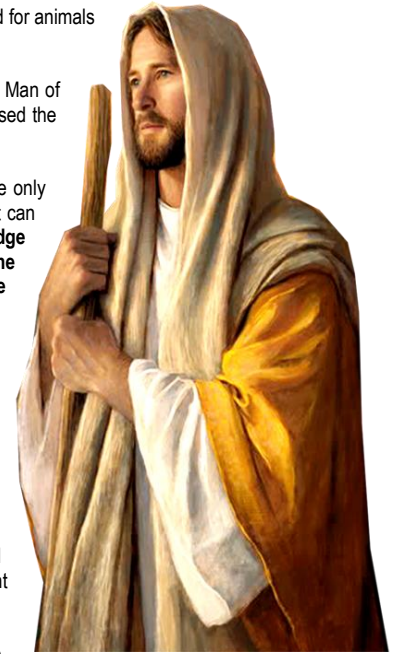
It should be remembered that the consequences of sinning against the Holy Ghost, though they may appear severe, are totally avoidable. The Lord has given us the ability to choose. Any sin against the Holy Ghost will come wholly upon the choice of the sinner. Only those whose choose to take the intentional and blatant outwardly rebellion against divine truth will be classified as a son of perdition. Joseph F. Smith wrote, **“Jesus himself declares (Matt. 12: 31) that ‘all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgive unto men, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.’ This is not a new doctrine that has just been revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, or President Brigham Young, but it is the doctrine of Jesus, a part and portion of that Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation or unto damnation. For whosoever will believe, repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins shall be saved, and he that believes not and is not baptized shall be damned. And he that believes, is baptized and receives the light and testimony of Jesus Christ, and walks well for a season, receiving the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel in this world, and afterwards turns wholly unto sin, violating his covenants, he will be among those whom the Gospel can never reach in the spirit world; all such go beyond its saving power, they will taste the second death, and be banished from the presence of God eternally.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 18, Joseph F. Smith, October 6, 1875, pages 93).

- 43 - **neither in this world** – The word “world” is translated from the Greek word “αἰών” or “aiōn”. It means for ever, an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity, the world, the universe, a period of time, or an age. The Codex Sinaiticus translates “neither in this world” as “neither in this age”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 32, page 30). The term refers to our mortal stay on earth.

We have come to recognize that the purpose of the earth is to allow God’s children a probationary period to grow and develop. During this period, there was allowed adequate time to repent of wrong doings, and reconcile poor behavior. God stands ready to forgive all manner of sin. We commit some pretty serious sins in life, and yet they are not outside of God’s reach. The sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven during our mortal probation, nor is it forgiven in the next life. People who commit this sin, are also fully committed to it.

- 44 - **neither in the world to come** – The phrase “world to come” is translated from the Greek word “μέλλω” or “mellō”. It means to be about, to be on the point of doing or suffering something, to intend, have in mind, or think to. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “neither in the world to come” as “nor in that to come”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 32, page 30). The term refers to our existence after mortality is finished.

- 45 - **make** – The word “make” is translated from the Greek word “ποιέω” or “poieō”. It means to make, produce, acquire, bear, author, grow or construct.



46 - the tree good – The word “tree” is translated from the Greek word “δένδρον” or “dendron”. It means a tree. The word “good” is translated from the Greek word “καλός” or “kalos”. It means beautiful, handsome, excellent, choice, precious, useful, or suitable. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “good” as “goodly”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 33, page 30).



Wood is a symbol for man. It is a fitting symbol, for no two pieces of wood are the same. They all come with different imperfections; knots, cracks, grain, and uniqueness. The tree shares this symbol, since it is the origin of wood. The tree adds another dimension to the symbol, since trees are capable of producing fruit. Fruit symbolizes the works of man. They can be good or evil. **“As putting forth both good and evil fruits, the tree is an image of man; as renewal through Christ’s death on the cross it is resurrection. The tree of the cross was symbolically made from the wood of the Tree of Knowledge, so that salvation and life were fulfilled on the tree from which had come the Fall and death, the vanquisher vanquished.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 178).

47 - fruit good – The word “fruit” is translated from the Greek word “καρπός” or “karpos”. It means fruit of the trees, vines or fields. It can also be used metaphorically of the offspring of mankind. It is also used metaphorically of the actions, work, and deeds produced by mankind. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “good” as “goodly”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 33, page 30). Fruit is used to symbolize **“immortality; the essence, the culmination and result of one state and the seed of the next. First fruits represent the best of that which is sacrificed. In Christianity, Christ is the First Fruit of the Virgin. The fruit of the Tree of Passion is world attachment. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is the Fall, self conscienciousness as separate from God. The fruit of the Tree of Life is immortality.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 72).

Jesus used the comparison between good fruits and good trees on several occasions. He even uses it in the Book of Mormon. When He visited the Nephites, the resurrected Jesus taught, **“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.”** (3rd Nephi 14:17-20).

I have a cherry tree in our front yard. It was planted by our builder, and I looked forward to it growing large enough to produce sweet cherries. It slowly grew, and started to produce. Much to my surprise, the cherries were extremely sour. I tried several things to help sweeten the cherries, only to discover that the tree was a sour cherry variety. The fruit would never change, because the sour cherry trees only produce sour cherries. Likewise, a tree that is prone to small fruit or bad fruit is inherently bad.

The symbolism of the tree represents human beings. Trees symbolize us. Like a bad tree, a bad person, one whose desires are wicked, will surely produce evil works. Fruit represents our works.

48 - make the tree corrupt – The word “corrupt” is translated from the Greek word “σαπρός” or “sapros”. It means rotten, or putrefied. It is used of something that is considered poor quality, bad, unfit for use, or worthless.

Trees are greatly influenced by their environment. A hard frost will destroy the cells of its fruit and cause them to rot on the tree. Lack of water or proper nutrients will cause the fruit to become small and not develop properly. It can cause poor texture or off flavors in the fruit. Insects and disease can cause odd fruit or no fruit at all. This all represents the various influences on man that effect his works. If we allow ourselves to be in the influence of evil, our works will surely be corrupt.

49 - his fruit corrupt – The word “fruit” is translated from the Greek word “καρπός” or “karpos”. It means fruit of the trees, vines or fields. It can also be used metaphorically of the offspring of mankind. It is also used metaphorically of the actions, work, and deeds produced by mankind.

The latter symbol brings an interesting layer to our discussion. If the tree represents man, and the fruit represents our children, the message would be a caution that children are influenced by the behavior of their fathers.

In either case, Jesus would have effectively argued that He was not performing exorcisms by the power of Beelzebub. In the first case, a person who is performing good works must be righteous. Watched long enough, an evil person’s works, no matter how disguised, will become evident as evil works. Similarly, children are most often a reflection of their parents. If you want to see the disposition of a child, look to the behavior of the parents since they mostly mimic them. Jesus’ Father was God. God is perfectly righteous, and Jesus is a reflection of Him



50 - the tree – The word “tree” is translated from the Greek word “δένδρον” or “dendron”. It means a tree. **“Trees are a universal symbol, inspiring awe and admiration among the people who depend on them for sustenance and shelter...Because they grow taller and live longer than human beings, trees also symbolize life, development, immortality, strength, and majesty...Trees signify eternity, family growth, immortality, life, motherhood, rebirth, redemption, strength and the torah.”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Deutsch, pages 181-182).

The Lord's analogy placed the Pharisees in a difficult position. It forces them to clarify their position by pointing out that it is contradictory. It is as though Jesus is saying, **"Be consistent, you Pharisees; make the tree good or bad; if it is good to cast our devils, and I cast them out, then my work is good, for a tree is known by its fruits; but if I am evil, as you say, then it must be a wicked thing to heal those possessed of evil spirits, for a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 275).

- 51 - **is known** – The word "known" is translated from the Greek word "γινώσκω" or "ginōskō". It means to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of, perceive, or understand.
- 52 - **by his fruit** – The word "fruit" is translated from the Greek word "καρπός" or "karpos". It means fruit of the trees, vines or fields. It can also be used metaphorically of the offspring of mankind. It is also used metaphorically of the actions, work, and deeds produced by mankind.

Our work, whether we like it or not, define who we are. Many will argue that goodness is defined by the heart, or one's desires. I would argue that one's desires are reflected like a mirror by our works. The desires of our heart will eventually be manifested by our works.

In order to help us obtain our full potential, the spirit of the Lord works on our heart. This makes perfect sense. If one's heart is corrupt, focusing on one's works is like putting fresh paint on a rusted out car. It might look good for a brief moment, but it won't take long for the paint to flake off and the rust to show forth. The Lord works on the inner man first, knowing that works will follow naturally. The Book of Mormon teaches, **"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."** (Mormon 7:16)

- 53 - **O** – The word "O" is implied in the translation. The Codex Sinaiticus omits the term "o" from its translation. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 34, page 30).
- 54 - **generation** – The word "generation" is translated from the Greek word "γέννημα" or "gennēma". It means that which has been born or begotten. It can be used of the offspring of man or the fruits of the earth. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the word "generation" as "brood". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 12, Verse 34, page 30).

For generations, the Jews had prided themselves on being the righteous descendants of Abraham. They were the chosen people, and therefore considered themselves favored of God and pious. They considered themselves righteous because of their genealogy. They were a generation of wayward children justifying themselves by the righteousness of distant ancestors. **"He called them broods of vipers, because they prided themselves on their forefathers. To signify therefore that they had no advantage thereby. He both casts them out from their relationship to Abraham, and assigns them forefathers of kindred disposition, having stripped them of that ground of illustriousness."** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 587).

Years ago, I was in Utah for a family wedding. The wedding was over far sooner than we anticipated. We ended up with a free afternoon. My brother-in-law was traveling with us, and asked if we could visit one of his companions from his mission in Australia. He directed us to a wealthy area of Salt Lake City. As I pulled up to the address I looked at a gorgeous estate built on a hill. Jokingly, I asked if his companion was a Rockefeller. His answer surprised me. He told me that his companion was Stephen R. McConkie Junior, the grandson of Bruce R. McConkie. The home we were visiting was his father, Stephen R. McConkie Senior. I have always wanted to be like Bruce R. McConkie. I have been more than impressed with his spiritual knowledge, humility, and understanding. I had heard incredible stories about him, and was about to meet someone who knew him personally. When we entered the home I had lots of questions. After asking a lot of questions, I asked what it was like to be a descendant of Bruce R. McConkie and consequently Hyrum Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, and many other general authorities. His answer was significant. He told me that his grandfather had once given him counsel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught him that even though he had a pedigree of great men and women, "No man can stand on another man's shoulders. All men, regardless of the accomplishments of their forefathers, must stand on their own feet." We cannot get into heaven on someone else's works or righteousness. These attributes must be gained individually.

Evil generations will be rewarded according to their own merits. The Lord warned, **"Wo unto all those that discomfort my people, and drive, and murder, and testify against them, saith the Lord of Hosts; a generation of vipers shall not escape the damnation of hell."** (Doctrine and Covenants 121:23).

- 55 - **vipers** – The word "vipers" is translated from the Greek word "ἐχιδνα" or "echidna". It means a viper or offspring of vipers. It can be used metaphorically for cunning, malignant, or wicked men. The viper, like the serpent, represent **"the enemy of God and the agent of the Fall; he represents the powers of evil; destruction; the grave; guile and craftiness; he is also the power of evil that man must overcome in himself."** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 149).

Wickedness has an innate desire to spread. Like a viper that strikes inflicting its poisonous venom, wicked men generally spread their wicked works inflicting sin upon many that they come in contact with. The Dead Sea Scrolls has an interesting passage which uses the figurative expression of the viper. Since they were written around the time of Jesus, they give cultural insight into the people of the time. One passage reads, **"Furthermore, they defile their holy spirit and open their mouth with a blaspheming tongue against the laws of the Covenant of God saying, 'They are not sure.' They speak abominations concerning them; they are all kindlers of fire and lighters of brands (Isa. 1, 11), their webs are spiders' webs and their eggs are vipers' eggs (Isa. lix, 5). No man that approaches them shall be free from guilt; the more he does so, the guiltier shall he be, unless he is pressed. For (already) in ancient times God visited their deeds and His anger was kindled against their works; for it is a people of no discernment (Isa. xxvii, 11), it is a nation void of counsel inasmuch as there is no discernment in them (Deut. xxxii, 28). For in ancient times, Moses and Aaron arose by the hand of the Prince of Lights and Belial in his cunning raised up Jannes and his brother when Israel was first delivered."**



(The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 168). I like the analogy of the viper's eggs. They seem harmless, as does sin at some times. We often think we can dabble in sin without consequence. But just like Viper eggs, the viper is always close by ready to strike. We cannot toy with sin thinking that it will be without a sting.

It is apparent that the ancient Jews used the figurative expression of the viper, and understood what it meant. It was a symbol for wicked men and the consequences of the works they proliferate. When Jesus used this term towards the Pharisees, they would have known just what He meant by it. It was not a flattering term. Another passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls reads,

"They consider but the mischief of their heart; [with] devilish [schemings] they unsheathe a perfidious tongue from which ever springs the poison of dragons. And like (serpents) which creep in the dust, so do they let fly [their poisonous darts], viper's [venom] against which there is no charm; and this has brought incurable pain, a malignant scourge within the body of Thy servant, causing [his spirit] to faint and draining his strength so that he maintains no firm stand. They have overtaken me in a narrow pass without escape and there is no [rest for me in my trial]. They sound my censure upon a harp and their murmuring and storming upon a zither. Anguish [seizes me] like the pangs of a woman in travail, and my heart is troubled within me. I am clothed in blackness and my tongue cleaves to the roof [of my mouth]; [for I fear the mischief of] their heart and their inclination (towards evil) appears as bitterness before me. The light of my face is dimmed to darkness and my radiance is turned to decay."



(The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, pages 322-323).

- 56 - **how can ye** – The phrase “can ye” is translated from the Greek word “δύναμις” or “dynamai”. It means to be able, to be capable, or strong and powerful. In evil man is not capable of speaking the words of the spirit because his works are offensive to the spirit. When the spirit is offended it ceases to strive with that individual making him incapable of speaking with its guidance.
- 57 - **being evil** – The word “evil” is translated from the Greek word “πονηρός” or “ponēros”. It means full of labors, annoyances, hardships, bad, or of a bad nature or condition. Evil is a state of rebellion against the laws, ordinances, and commandments of God. Anything contrary to God is evil. Anything in accordance with God’s mind and will is righteous. There is no gray area, or middle ground with regards to eternal law. In mortality, we often look for the loopholes in the Law. We look for the gray area and then exploit it. God’s laws are not so poorly written. There are no loopholes.
- 58 - **speak** – The word “speak” is translated from the Greek word “λαλέω” or “laleō”. It means to utter a voice or emit a sound. It can also mean to speak, talk or tell.

One of my favorite scriptures is a plea from the Book of Mormon prophet Alma. He understood the power of speaking by the spirit. He wrote, **"O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people! Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth. But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me."** (Alma 29:1-3).

Wicked men speak at the direction of their own carnal desires. Chrysostom wrote, **"And this is naturally the case; for while the tongue through shame often pours not forth all its wickedness at once, the heart having no human witness, fearlessly gives birth to whatever evils it will; for of God it hath not much regard. Since then men’s sayings come to examination, and are set before all, but the heart is concealed; therefore the evils of the former grow less, while those of the latter increase."** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 588). It is the spirit of the Lord that reigns in the natural desires of man. It purifies one’s thoughts and aligns one’s desires with God. Without the spirit we are left to our own devices.

- 59 - **good things** – The term “good things” is translated from the Greek word “ἀγαθός” or “agathos”. It means a good constitution or nature, useful, good, pleasant, agreeable, upright, or honorable.

The human mouth is said to be the porthole to the heart. By the things we say, we reveal the desires and intents of our heart. The Apostle James wrote, **"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."** (James 3:10-12). The mouth will either send forth evil or it will send forth righteousness, depending on the orientation of the heart.

- 60 - **out of the abundance** – The word “abundance” is translated from the Greek word “περίσσευμα” or “perisseuma”. It means abundance, in which one delights or fills the heart.

- 61 - **of the heart** – The word “heart” is translated from the Greek word “καρδία” or “kardia”. It means the heart; that organ in the animal body which is the centre of the circulation of the blood, and hence was regarded as the seat of physical life. The heart symbolizes **"the center of being, both physical and spiritual...it is the center of understanding and feeling."** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 82). Another symbolic dictionary defines the heart as follows; **"In traditional cultures, the heart was considered the center of the body; the earth, the center of the physical universe...In Jewish tradition, the heart is similarly seen as the center of the inner life, which includes both feeling and thought...According to the Talmud, the heart contains all human desires, both good and bad."** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 75). A dark or stony heart is a symbol of wickedness. A red heart is a symbol of a repented or clean heart.



No matter how hard we try to present ourselves as righteous, pious, or honorable, if our heart is evil it is only a matter of time before our outward acts will reveal the truth. **“The state of a man’s heart can be seen through the words he speaks. Long ago Menander the Greek dramatist said: ‘A man’s character can be known from his words.’ That which is in the heart can come to the surface only through the lips; a man can produce through his lips only what he has in his heart. There is nothing so revealing as words. We do not need to talk to a man long before we discover whether he has a mind that is wholesome or a mind that is dirty; we do not need to listen to him long before we discover whether he has a mind that is kind or a mind that is cruel; we do not need to listen for long to a man who is preaching or teaching or lecturing to find out whether his mind is clear or whether it is muddled. We are continually revealing what we are by what we say.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 52-53).

- 62 - **the mouth speaketh** – The word “mouth” is translated from the Greek word “στόμα” or “stoma”. It means the mouth, as part of the body: of man, of animals, of fish, etc. The mouth symbolizes the **“rendering”** or gateway to the heart. (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 116). By a man’s words one can typically determine the type of actions and deeds he will perform. Though he might be cautious at first and choose his words such that they portray him as something he really isn’t, if you listen long enough a man’s words will become very revealing. Our words will eventually reveal our true thoughts and our thoughts reveal our heart.
- 63 - **a good man** – The word “good” is translated from the Greek word “ἀγαθός” or “agathos”. It means It means a good constitution or nature, useful, good, pleasant, agreeable, upright, or honorable. The inference in this passage of scripture is to righteousness. A good man is one who follows the word of God and lives it in word thought and action.
- 64 - **out of** – The term “out of” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκ” or “ek”. It means out of, from, by, or away from.

65 - **the good treasure** – The word “treasure” is translated from the Greek word “θησαυρός” or “thēsauros”. It means the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up; a casket, coffer, or other receptacle, in which valuables are kept. It can mean a treasury, storehouse, repository, or magazine. It can also mean the things laid up in a treasury, collected treasures. The term treasure is used symbolically to represent that thing which is of most value to someone. I have often heard it said that one man’s trash is another man’s treasure. The treasures of the heart are the things that one not only desired the most, but places are the priorities of his life. One can always see a man’s figurative treasure, because he will speak of it often. **“If the treasury of the heart is full of kind, happy, positive things, those are what will undoubtedly proceed out of the mouth. The opposite is likewise true: If the heart is full of angry, dark and hostile feelings, those are what will spew forth out of the mouth.”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, pages 274-275).



Good treasures are the things that we value which have eternal worth. They are spiritual in nature, and lack temporal limitations. They are eternal families, exaltation, priesthood, and divine nature; just to name a few.

- 66 - **bringeth forth** – The phrase “bringeth forth” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκβάλλω” or “ekballō”. It means to cast out, drive out, or to send out, typically with a notion of violence or force.
- 67 - **an evil man** – The word “evil” is translated from the Greek word “πονηρός” or “ponēros”. It means full of labor, annoyances, or hardships. It can also mean bad, or of a bad nature or condition. In an ethical sense it means wicker of bad.

68 - **evil treasure** – The word “treasure” is translated from the Greek word “θησαυρός” or “thēsauros”. It means the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up; a casket, coffer, or other receptacle, in which valuables are kept. It can mean a treasury, storehouse, repository, or magazine. It can also mean the things laid up in a treasury, collected treasures.



An evil treasure is one that is of no value, or detrimental in nature. Anciently, some treasures were considered to be cursed. Folk lore taught that these treasures, if obtained, would bring calamity and even death to those that possess it. Figuratively, an evil treasure is a desire that will bring pain and anguish, or is of no value whatsoever. In this chapter, it represents thoughts and attitudes that are contrary to the mind and will of God. These desires, though they may have some immediate satisfaction, are eternally empty. They take us away from the real prize of eternal life.

Unfortunately, many of us harbor evil treasures in our heart. This sounds odd, but most of us have desires that are not totally in line with heaven. They are our favorite sins, so to speak. While serving my mission in Denmark, I was privileged to hear from several General Authorities. President Carlos E. Asay, the President of the European Area visited and shared a personal challenge from his own life. He reached into his suit jacket pocket and pulled out an index card. On the side that we could see, he had written the word “WAR” in large capital letters. He explained that he was currently engaged in the war against sin. He carried with him a war card, at all times, which represented his personal mission in the war. On the other side of the card, the side that we could not see, he explained that he had written down a sin that he was struggling with. He carried the card as a constant reminder of his mission to defeat that sin and eradicate it from his life. He also wrote quotes and scriptures on the card which assisted him in his mission. He related that he kept this war card in his pocket, actively working on the specific sin until the mission was complete: total eradication from his thoughts and deeds. He said that this was not his first mission, referring to the card in hand. He had successfully completed multiple missions. President Asay explained that when he first started his personal war on sin, the mission options were plentiful. There were lots of things in his life that needed change. He said that he quickly choose his missions and got to work. The first missions were encouraging. He quickly overcame the sins, and signed up for the next one. He made an interesting observation. The later missions became more difficult. Human nature drew him first to those sins that easiest to overcome. As time drew on, the selection became more difficult. That is, until he came to his favorite sins. He did not share them with us, but pointed out that our favorite sins are the ones that are deeply seated in our hearts. These are the difficult missions. They are our evil treasures, and are often difficult to claim victory over.

An evil man is resistant to letting go of his evil treasures. He will hold on to them with the false belief that they will bring lasting joy and satisfaction to him. The truth is, this is only a façade of the devil. He will aggressively sell evil treasure as eternally good treasure. This is one of his great lies.

- 69 - **evil thing** – The word “thing” is implied in the translation.
- 70 - **I say unto you** – The phrase “unto you” is translated from the Greek word “ὑμῖν” or “hymin”. It means you. The term “I say unto you” is a Semitic figure of speech. It is a declaration that what follows is important.
- 71 - **idle word** – The word “idle” is translated from the Greek word “ἀργός” or “argos”. It means free from labor, at leisure, lazy, or shunning the labor which one ought perform. **“Jesus laid it down that a man would specially render account for his idle words. The word that it used for idle is aergos (Greek #692); ergon (Greek #2041)is the Greek for a**

deed; and the prefix "a"--means "without"; aergos (Greek #692) described that which was not meant to produce anything. It is used, for instance of a barren tree, of fallow land, of the Sabbath day when no work could be done, of an idle man." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 52).

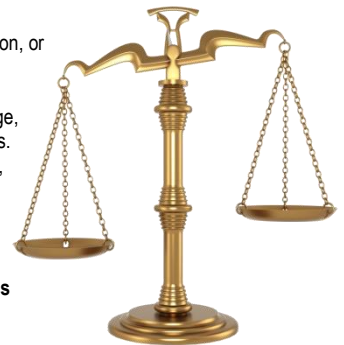
The word idle has many different meanings. The most appropriate for this passage defines the word as without purpose or effect; pointless. Many conduct their affairs in life without direction or forward thinking. Their words are without divine destination. They seek only self gratification and momentary happiness. Their words are consequently prone to falsehoods, tales, and indulgences. **"And that is idle, which is not according to the fact, which is false, which hath in it unjust accusation; and some say, that which is vain also, for instance, provoking inordinate laughter, or what is filthy, and immodest, and coarse."** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 589).

The scriptures are consistent in their warnings regarding idle speech. God knows the relationship between our hearts and our speech, and so he warns; **"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."** (Ecclesiastes 5:2). We are encouraged to let our speech reflect the things that are praiseworthy and righteous. Paul, in his letter to the saints in Ephesus, wrote, **"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."** (Ephesians 5:4).

Furthermore, we understand that the Lord will judge us not merely on our actions, but the desires of our hearts and the words that utter from our mouths. Orson Pratt taught, **"The testimonies will be forthcoming, one of which will be the record, the books that are written. Every idle word that is spoken, every idle thought that has ever entered into the hearts of man will be written and brought up, and out of that record of our conduct - our thoughts, words and deeds - will we be judged."** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 17, Orson Pratt, October 11, 1874, page 185).

- 72 - **men shall speak** – The word "speak" is translated from the Greek word "λαλέω" or "laleō". It means to utter a voice or emit a sound. It can also mean to speak, talk or tell.
- 73 - **give account** – The word "give" is translated from the Greek word "ἀποδοῖμι" or "apodidōmi". It means to deliver, to give away for one's own profit what is one's own, or to sell. It can also mean to pay off, or discharge what is due.
- 74 - **day of judgment** – The word "judgment" is translated from the Greek word "κρίσις" or "krisis". It means a separating, sundering, selection, or judgment.

Our mortal lives are a gracious probationary period that allow us to work through the weaknesses of the flesh with opportunity to change, learn and perfect the union of our spirit and body. The end goal is that our bodies are placed in willing, righteous subjection to our spirits. When mortality is complete, our spirits are again separated from our mortal bodies. This state of separation is described as a form of hell, for a fullness of joy can only be achieved when the spirit is united with the body. The work of progression continues in the world of the spirits, though it is greatly hampered by the absence of the body. That is why we are counseled to repent while in mortality and learn quickly to obey the direction of the spirit. After the days of our probation are completed, and we have chosen to either place our soul in subjection to God or to disobey Him, **"The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt."** (Alma 11:43). This is what is referred to as the "day of judgment".



In the "day of judgment", we will recall all the idle words we have spoken. We will recall our carnal and evil thoughts. We will remember the works of evil we committed and we will remember all the desires of our hearts.

- 75 - **for by thy words** – The word "words" is translated from the Greek word "λόγος" or "logos". It means a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea. In a very real sense, the words we choose to use in life will either classify us as righteous, or condemn us as wicked. The poet wrote, **"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."** (Proverbs 18:21).
- 76 - **be justified** – The word "justified" is translated from the Greek word "δικαιώω" or "dikaioō". It means to render righteous or such he ought to be. It can also mean to show, exhibit, declare, or pronounce.
- 77 - **by thy words** – The word "words" is translated from the Greek word "λόγος" or "logos". It means a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea.

Words and actions typically go hand in hand. **"It is the words which a man speaks without thinking, the words which he utters when the conventional restraints are removed, which really show what he is like. As Plummer puts it, 'The carefully spoken words may be a calculated hypocrisy.' When a man is consciously on his guard, he will be careful what he says and how he says it; but when he is off his guard, his words reveal his character. It is quite possible for a man's public utterances to be fine and noble, and for his private conversation to be coarse and salacious. In public he carefully chooses what he says; in private he takes the sentinels away, and any word leaves the gateway of his lips. It is so with anger; a man will say in anger what he really thinks and what he has often wanted to say, but which the cool control of prudence has kept him from saying. Many a man is a model of charm and courtesy in public, when he knows he is being watched and is deliberately careful about his words; while in his own house he is a dreadful example of irritability, sarcasm, temper, criticism, querulous complaint because there is no one to hear and to see. It is a humbling thing--and a warning thing--to remember that the words which show what we are, are the words we speak when our guard is down."** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 52).

- 78 - **be condemned** – The word "condemned" is translated from the Greek word "καταδικάζω" or "katadikazō". It means to condemn, to give judgment against one, or to pronounce guilty.
- 79 - **the scribes** – The word "scribe" is translated from the Greek word "γραμματεὺς" or "grammateus". It means a man learned in the Mosaic law and in the sacred writings, an interpreter, teacher. Scribes examined the more difficult and subtle questions of the law; added to the Mosaic law decisions of various kinds thought to elucidate its meaning and scope, and did this to the detriment of religion. Since the advice of men skilled in the law was needed in the examination in the causes and the solution of the difficult questions, they were enrolled in the Sanhedrin; and are mentioned in connection with the priests and elders of the people.

In the case of this chapter, the scribes were representatives of the great ruling counsel. **"This group is headed and guided and influenced by the scribal spies of the Great Sanhedrin which sits in Jerusalem itself. Yet others of his hearers choose to stand neutral; their spiritual strength does not align them with the ensign of righteousness that he has raised."**



They fear the Pharisees and have postponed a decision as to where and with whom they will pledge their allegiance. It is of them that Jesus has just said that those who are not for him are against him – there is no such thing as neutrality in the cause of truth and righteousness, either on earth or in heaven – and they who do not gather with him, by their indifferences and indecision, scatter abroad.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 147).

80 - **came down from Jerusalem** – The word “Jerusalem” is translated from the Greek word “Ἱεροσόλυμα” or “Hierosolyma”. Translated literally it means “set ye double peace”. In Greek this passage reads, “*hoi grammateis hoi apo Hierolymon katabantes*. Since Jerusalem is situated in the Judaeen hills, ‘to descend’ is a natural verb to use for the scribes’ journey, but the verb may also have symbolic overtones: the scribes’ descent here contrasts with Jesus’ recent and future ascent of a mountain and his future ascent to Jerusalem. In biblical texts descent is often a bad thing; see, for example, the Israelite’ descent to Egypt and the descent or fall of Satan and his angels from heaven.” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 271).



Jerusalem symbolizes the abode of God. The Jews saw the city as the center of not only the earth, but the entire universe. “No place has been more sacred over time to Jews than Jerusalem, one of whose traditional names is ‘Ir Ha-

Kodesh’ – ‘the Holy City’.” (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 81).

The journey from Jerusalem to the area of Galilee where we suspect this chapter took place is approximately 102 miles and would have taken about 34 hours of continuous hiking to travel the distance. It is suspected that the journey took about 5.7 days. For the scribes and Pharisees to travel to Jesus was a significant commitment. They were either there on other business, or the concern over Jesus was so great as to warrant a journey for the sole reason of assessing Him.



81 - **parables** – The word “parable” is translated from the Greek word “παραβολή” or “parabolē”. It means a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition, as of ships in battle. “The parable seems to assume that, before Jesus appeared on the scene, Satan was the head of the household of this world, an identification perhaps already implied by the epithet ‘Beelzebul’ = ‘lord of the abode’. In Rabbinic parables, by contrast, it is more common to find God in the householder role. Jesus was certainly aware of this conventional usage, as is clear from some of his own.” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 274).

82 - **rise up** – The word “rise up” is translated from the Greek word “ἀνίστημι” or “anistēmi”. It means to cause to rise up, or raise up.

83 - **hath an end** – The word “end” is translated from the Greek word “τέλος” or “telos”. It means end or the last in any succession or series.

84 - **No man** – The term “No man” is translated from the Greek word “οὐδεὶς” or “oudeis”. It means on one, or nothing. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “No man” as “no one”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Mark, Chapter 3, Verse 27, page 71). “Literally, ‘no one cannot’, typically a Markan double negative; there is another at the beginning of our passage.” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 274).

85 - **Verily** – The word “verily” is translated from the Greek word “ἀμῆν” or “amēn”. At the beginning of a discourse, it means surely, truly, or of a truth. At the end, it means so it is, so be it, or may it be fulfilled. It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when someone had read or discoursed, or offered up a solemn prayer to God, the others responded with “amen”, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own. Marcus wrote that the word verily is “a transliteration of Hebrew ‘amen’, which is derived from a root denoting truth, trustworthiness, or faithfulness, and is already used in liturgical settings in the Old Testament. The Septuagint usually translates it as genoitō, ‘Let it be.’” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 275).

It should be noted that Joseph Smith received an inspired translation for this passage. It sheds some additional light on the story. It reads, “And then came certain men unto him, accusing him, saying, Why do ye receive sinners, seeing thou makest thyself the Son of God. But he answered them and said, Verily I say unto you, All sins which men have committed, when they repent, shall be forgiven them; for I came to preach repentance unto the sons of men. And blasphemies, wherewith soever they shall blaspheme, shall be forgiven them that come unto me, and do the works which they see me do. But there is a sin which shall not be forgiven. He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness; but is in danger of being cut down out of the world. And they shall inherit eternal damnation. And this he said unto them because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” (Joseph Smith Inspired Translation of Mark 3:21-25).

86 - **All sins** – The word “sins” is translated from the Greek word “ἁμαρτήματα” or “hamartēmata”. It means sin or an evil deed. The Codex Sinaiticus omits the word “sins” rendering the translated passages to read “I say unto you that all sins shall be forgiven”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Mark, Chapter 3, Verse 28, page 71).

87 - the sons of men – The word “man” is translated from the Greek word “ἄνθρωπος” or “anthrōpos”. It means a human being, whether male or female. This has inference to imperfect mortal men, while the term “Son of Man” has reference to the “Son of Man of Holiness”; meaning Jesus Christ.

88 - hath never forgiveness – The word “forgiveness” is translated from the Greek word “ἄφεσις” or “aphesis”. It means release from bondage or imprisonment. It can also mean forgiveness or pardon.

Once you begin to understand, even in a small way, the true character of God and His beloved Son, it is difficult to accept the idea that God would refuse forgiveness to any of His children. In fact, **“President George Q. Cannon once taught: ‘No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character [to do so]... He will [always] stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them.’ ”** (General Conference, “Tomorrow the Lord will do Wonders Among You”, Jeffrey R. Holland, April 2016). We understand that God has a desire to save us, even when we have sinned. President Uchtdorf taught, **“It matters not how completely ruined our lives may seem. It matters not how scarlet our sins, how deep our bitterness, how lonely, abandoned, or broken our hearts may be. Even those who are without hope, who live in despair, who have betrayed trust, surrendered their integrity, or turned away from God can be rebuilt. Save those rare sons of perdition, there is no life so shattered that it cannot be restored.”** (General Conference, “He will Place You on His Shoulders”, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, April 2016).

To understand that God wants to save all His children, and then in the same breath declare that there are some, even if they be few, who will not be saved in any kingdom of Glory may seem contradictory. Even so, it becomes less conflicting when one considers that those who will not be saved are those that choose not to be rather than God withdrawing His redemptive love. The Lord himself taught, **“I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.”** (Moses 5:9). Those that refuse to be saved will only be cast off after they have received a full witness of the truth and turned away there from. Barclay put it this way, **“It is startling to find words about an unforgivable sin on the lips of Jesus the Saviour of men. So startling is this that some wish to take away the sharp definiteness of the meaning. They argue that this is only another example of that vivid Eastern way of saying things, as, for example, when Jesus said that a man must hate father and mother truly to be his disciple, and that it is not to be understood in all its awful literalness, but simply means that the sin against the Holy Spirit is supremely terrible.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 46).

The saving power of Jesus is beyond our comprehension. He paid for our salvation by literally taking upon Him the consequences for our sin. Because He did this, on an individual level, He has the power to comfort, understand, and empathetically redeem us from sin, pain, trails, and all manner of folly and struggle. **“To those who stagger or stumble, he is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end he is there to save us, and for all this he gave his life. However dim our days may seem they have been darker for the Savior of the world.”** (General Conference, “This do in Remembrance of Me”, Jeffrey R. Holland, October 1995).

89 - in danger – The word “danger” is translated from the Greek word “ἐνοχος” or “enochos”. It means bound, under obligation, subject to or liable. It can also mean guilt or worthy of punishment. The Codex Sinaiticus translates “in danger” as “guilty”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Mark, Chapter 3, Verse 29, page 71).

Such words are a warning to the Pharisees and scribes that their opposition to the everlasting truth places them on a path to judgment. This path pits them against the very God that they claimed to worship. As their witness becomes greater, they risk becoming sons of perdition. Chrysostom wrote, **“See how again He conciliates and soothes them, and draws them to the knowledge of Himself, and signifies that they are warring with their own good, and contentious against their own salvation.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 579).

90 - eternal damnation – The word “eternal” is translated from the Greek word “αἰώνιος” or “aiōnios”. It means without beginning and end, that which always has been and always will be. The word “damnation” is translated from the Greek word “κρίσις” or “krisis”. It means a separating, sundering, selection, or judgment. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “eternal damnation” as “eternal sin”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Mark, Chapter 3, Verse 29, page 71).

Eternal damnation, as I understand it, is the fate of those who reject the truth after receiving a full and perfect witness thereof via the Holy Ghost. We refer to this sin as the sin against the Holy Ghost. Elder McConkie explains, **“They shall be sons of perdition, citizens of Lucifer’s kingdom, in which realm they shall be damned to all eternal, for they have committed the unpardonable sin.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 275). This realm will be void of all light. Figuratively speaking, though there may be literal implications, those condemned to eternal damnation will be absolutely void of the influence of any member of the Godhead or the godness derived thereof.

To say that all the vial sinners of mortality will be condemned to eternal damnation is false. Many commit sin, but lack the knowledge and understanding for such a fate. President George Q. Cannon taught, **“To say that these heathens, who roamed over these mountains and through these valleys, before we came here, who never heard the name of Jesus Christ, and countless myriads of heathen in other lands who have died in ignorance of the Gospel, will be consigned to eternal damnation, to a never-ending hell, there to welter in and to suffer unspeakable and indescribable misery throughout the countless ages of eternity, because they did not obey the Gospel they never heard, is one of the greatest libels on the character of our God that ever was enunciated by man. I do not believe in such a God; he is not the God of the Bible; he is not the God I worship. I worship a God of mercy and of love, whose heart is full of compassion. The Bible teaches that God is love, and I can not conceive that a God would be possessed of the attributes of love and mercy who would take such a course with his own ignorant offspring. No, there is something different from this taught in the Gospel. We are taught there that God’s salvation is not confined to this brief space which we call time, but that, as he is eternal, so are his mercy, love and compassion eternal towards his creatures.”** (The Journal of Discourses, Volume 15, George Q. Cannon, July 14, 1872, pages 117-118).

91 - unclean spirit – The word “unclean” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκάθαρτος” or “akathartos”. It means not cleansed or unclean. It can be used in a ceremonial sense indicating someone who has not followed the Levitical law. In a moral sense it is used of someone who has unclean thought or actions.

The Pharisees and scribes were making both mental and verbal attacks against Jesus. Ironically, they were portraying Him opposite of what He really was. They accused Him of violating the Law of Moses, though primarily the Oral Law. They further accused Him of violating the rites associated with cleanliness and Sabbath worship.

March 28CE																														
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Book 4, Part 1 Timeline

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 The 2nd Passover - Healing at the Pool of Bethesda
 The 2nd Passover - Jesus' Healing Questioned

April 28CE																													
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Nisan 3788												Iyyar 3788																	

\$3
 Disciples Pluck Corn on the Sabbath

\$4 \$5 \$6 \$7 \$8 \$9
 Man with Withered Hand Healed
 Jesus withdraws to the Sea
 The Twelve Chosen
 The Sermon on the Plain
 The Centurion's Servant Healed
 The Son of the Widow of Nain Raised

May 28CE																														
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\$10 \$11
 John send Messenger to Question Jesus
 Jesus Anointed by Sinful Woman

\$12
 Another Tour of Galilee

June 28CE																													
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July 28CE																														
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\$13 \$14
 Blind and Dumb Man Healed
 Charge Jesus in with Beelzebub

Charged Jesus to be in League with Beelzebub

The End