

## Luke: 11:20-28.

### From Catena Aurea:

11:17–20

17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 41. in Matt.) The suspicion of the Pharisees being utterly without reason, they dared not divulge it for fear of the multitude, but pondered it in their minds. Hence it is said, But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself will be brought to desolation.

CHRYSOSTOM. (ubi sup.) He did not answer them from the Scriptures, since they gave no heed to them, explaining them away falsely; but he answers them from things of every day occurrence. For a house and a city if it be divided is quickly scattered to nothing; and likewise a kingdom, than which nothing is stronger. For the harmony of the inhabitants maintains houses and kingdoms. If then, says He, I cast out devils by means of a devil, there is dissension among them, and their power perishes. Hence He adds, But if Satan be divided against himself, how shall he stand? For Satan resists not himself, nor hurts his soldiers, but rather strengthens his kingdom. It is then by Divine power alone that I crush Satan under my feet.

AMBROSE. Herein also He shews His own kingdom to be undivided and everlasting. Those then who possess no hope in Christ, but think that He casts out devils through the chief of the devils, their kingdom, He says, is not everlasting. This also has reference to the Jewish people. For how can the kingdom of the Jews be everlasting, when by the people of the law Jesus is denied, who is promised by the law? Thus in part does the faith of the Jewish people impugn itself; the glory of the wicked is divided, by division is

destroyed. And therefore the kingdom of the Church shall remain for ever, because its faith is undivided in one body.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 23. in Matt) This then is the first answer; the second which relates to His disciples He gives as follows, And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? He says not, "My disciples," but your sons, wishing to soothe their wrath.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For the disciples of Christ were Jews, and sprung from Jews according to the flesh, and they had obtained from Christ power over unclean spirits, and delivered those who were oppressed by them in Christ's name. Seeing then that your sons subdue Satan in My name, is it not very madness to say that I have My power from Beelzebub? Ye are then condemned by the faith of your children. Hence He adds, Therefore shall they be your judges.

CHRYSOSTOM. (ut sup.) For since they who come forth from you are obedient unto Me, it is plain that they will condemn those who do the contrary.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Since then what you say bears upon it the mark of calumny, it is plain that by the Spirit of God I cast out devils. Hence He adds, But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

AUGUSTINE. (de cons. Ev. l. ii. c. 38.) That Luke speaks of the finger of God, where Matthew has said, the Spirit, does not take away from their agreement in sense, but it rather teaches us a lesson, that we may know what meaning to give to the finger of God, whenever we read it in the Scriptures.

AUGUSTINE. (de Quæst. Ev. l. ii. qu. 17.) Now the Holy Spirit is called the finger of God, because of the distribution of gifts which are given through Him, to every one his own gift, whether he be of men or angels. For in none of our members is division more apparent than in our fingers.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Or the Holy Spirit is called the finger of God for this reason. The Son was said to be the hand and arm of the Father, (Ps. 98:1.) for the Father worketh all things by Him. As then the finger is not separate from the hand, but by nature a part of it; so the Holy Spirit is consubstantially united to the Son, and through Him the Son does all things.

AMBROSE. Nor would you think in the compacting together of our limbs any division of power to be made, for there can be no division in an undivided thing. And therefore the appellation of finger must be referred to the form of unity, not to the distinction of power.

ATHANASIUS. (Orat. 2. con. Arian.) But at this time our Lord does not hesitate because of His humanity to speak of Himself as inferior to the Holy Spirit, saying, that He cast out devils by Him, as though the human nature was not sufficient for the casting out of devils without the power of the Holy Spirit.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. And therefore it is justly said, The kingdom of God is come upon you, that is, "If I as a man cast out devils by the Spirit of God, human nature is enriched through Me, and the kingdom of God is come."

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 41. ut sup.) But it is said, upon you, that He might draw them to Him; as if He said, If prosperity comes to you, why do you despise your good things?

AMBROSE. At the same time He shews that it is a regal power which the Holy Spirit possesses, in whom is the kingdom of God, and that we in whom the Spirit dwells are a royal house.

TITUS BOSTRENSIS. (in Matt.) Or He says, The kingdom of God is come upon you, signifying, "is come against you, not for you." For dreadful is the second coming of Christ to faithless Christians.

11:21–23

21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

23. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. As it was necessary for many reasons to refute the cavils of His opponents, our Lord now makes use of a very plain example, by which He proves to those who will consider it that He overcomes the power of the world, by a power inherent in Himself, saying, When a strong man armed keepeth his palace.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 41. in Matt.) He calls the devil a strong man, not because he is naturally so, but referring to his ancient dominion, of which our weakness was the cause.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For he used before the coming of the Saviour to seize with great violence upon the flocks of another, that is, God, and carry them as it were to his own fold.

THEOPHYLACT. The Devil's arms are all kinds of sins, trusting in which he prevailed against men.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For as soon as the Word of the Most High God, the Giver of all strength, and the Lord of Hosts, was made man, He attacked him, and took away his arms.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For the Jews who had been a long time entrapped by him into ignorance of God and sin, have been called out by the holy Apostles to the knowledge of the truth, and presented to God the Father, through faith in the Son.

BASIL. Christ also divides the spoil, shewing the faithful watch which angels keep over the salvation of men.

CHRYSOSTOM. (ubi sup.) Next we have the fourth answer, where it is added, He who is not with me is against me; as if He says, I wish to present men to God, but Satan the contrary. How then would he who does not work with Me, but scatters what is Mine, become so united with Me, as with Me to cast out devils? It follows, And he who gathereth not with me, scattereth.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. As if He said, I came to gather together the sons of God whom he hath scattered. And Satan himself as he is not with Me, tries to scatter those which I have gathered and saved. How then does he whom I use all My efforts to resist, supply Me with power?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 41. in Matt.) But if he who does not work with Me is My adversary, how much more he who opposes Me? It seems however to me that he here under a figure refers to the Jews, ranging them with the devil. For they also acted against, and scattered those whom He gathered together.

11:24–26

24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. After what had gone before, our Lord proceeds to shew how it was that the Jewish people had sunk to these opinions concerning Christ, saying, When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, &c. For that this example relates to the Jews, Matthew has explained when he says, Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (Matt. 12:45.) For all the time that they were living in Egypt in the

practice of the Egyptians, there dwelt in them an evil spirit, which was drawn out of them when they sacrificed the lamb as a type of Christ, and were sprinkled with its blood, and so escaped the destroyer.

AMBROSE. The comparison then is between one man and the whole Jewish people, from whom through the Law the unclean spirit had been cast out. But because in the Gentiles, whose hearts were first barren, but afterwards in baptism moistened with the dew of the Spirit, the devil could find no rest because of their faith in Christ, (for to the unclean spirits Christ is a flaming fire,) he then returned to the Jewish people. Hence it follows, And finding none, he saith, I will return to my house whence I came.

ORIGEN. That is, to those who are of Israel, whom he saw possessing nothing divine in them, but desolate, and vacant for him to take up his abode there; and so it follows, And when he came, he findeth it swept and garnished.

AMBROSE. For Israel being adorned with a mere outward and superficial beauty, remains inwardly the more polluted in her heart. For she never quenched or allayed her fires in the water of the sacred fountain, and rightly did the unclean spirit return to her, bringing with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Hence it follows, And he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there. Seeing that in truth she has sacrilegiously profaned the seven weeks of the Law, (i. e. from Easter to Pentecost,) and the mystery of the eighth day. Therefore as upon us is multiplied the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, so upon them falls the whole accumulated attack of the unclean spirits. For the number seven is frequently taken to mean the whole.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 43. in Matt.) Now the evil spirits who dwell in the souls of the Jews, are worse than those in former times. For then the Jews raged against the Prophets, now they lift up their hands against the Lord of the Prophets, and therefore suffered worse things from Vespasian and Titus than in Egypt and Babylon. Hence it follows, And the last state of that man is worse than the former. Then too they had with them the Providence of God, and the grace of the Holy Spirit; but now they are deprived even of this protection, so that there is now a greater lack of virtue, and their sorrows are more intense, and the tyranny of the evil spirits more terrible.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. The last state also is worse than the first, according to the words of the Apostle, It were better not to have known the way of truth, than after they have known it to turn back from it. (2 Pet. 2:21.)

CHRYSOSTOM. (ut sup.) Let us receive the words which follow, as said not only to them, but also to ourselves, And the last state of that man shall be worse than the first; for if enlightened and released from our former sins we again return to the same course of wickedness, a heavier punishment will await our latter sins.

11:27–28

27. And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

28. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 44. in Matt.) In this answer He sought not to disown His mother, but to shew that His birth would have profited her nothing, had she not been really fruitful in works and faith. But if it profited Mary nothing that Christ derived His birth from her, without the inward virtue of her heart, much less will it avail us to have a virtuous father, brother, or son, while we ourselves are strangers to virtue.

### **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

#### **11:17–20 The Kingdom Has Come in Jesus' Ministry**

##### **Jesus' Commonsense Response.**

Cyril of Alexandria: He proceeds to arguments drawn from common things but which have the force of truth in them....

Kingdoms are established by the fidelity of subjects and the obedience of those under the royal scepter. Houses are established when those who belong to them in no way whatsoever thwart one another but, on the contrary, agree in will and deed. I suppose it would establish the kingdom too of Beelzebub, had he determined to abstain from everything contrary to himself. How then does Satan cast out Satan? It follows then that devils do not depart from people on their own accord but retire unwillingly. "Satan," he says, "does not fight with himself." He does not rebuke his own servants. He does not permit himself to injure his own armorbearers. On the contrary, he helps his kingdom. "It remains for you to understand that I crush Satan by divine power." Commentary on Luke, Homily 80.

### **The Finger of God is the Holy Spirit.**

Cyril of Alexandria: By the finger of God, he means the Holy Spirit. The Son is called the hand and arm of God the Father because he does all things by the Son, and the Son in a similar way works by the Spirit. Just as the finger is attached to the hand as something not foreign from it but belonging to it by nature, so also the Holy Spirit, by reason of his being equal in substance, is joined in oneness to the Son, although he proceeds from God the Father. The Son does every thing by the consubstantial Spirit. Here he purposely says that by the finger of God he casts out devils, speaking as a man. The Jews in the infirmity and folly of their mind would not have endured it if he said, "by my own Spirit I cast out devils." Commentary on Luke, Homily 81.

### **In Jesus, We See the Kingdom of God.**

Cyril of Alexandria: Although he is by nature God and the Giver of the Spirit from God the Father to those who are worthy and employs as his own that power which is from him, he spoke as a man. He is consubstantial with him, and whatever is said to be done by God the Father, this necessarily is by the Son in the Spirit. He says, "If I, being a man, and having become like you, cast out devils in the Spirit of God, human nature has in me first attained to a godlike kingdom." For it has become glorious by breaking the power of Satan and rebuking the impure and abominable spirits. This is the meaning of the words "the kingdom of God has come upon you." Commentary on Luke, Homily 81.

### **11:21–22 Jesus Has Conquered Satan**

#### **The Stronger One Prevails Over Satan.**

Cyril of Alexandria: He has conquered the ruler of this world. Having, so to speak, hamstrung him and stripped him of the power he possessed, he has given him over for a prey to his followers. He says, "The strong man, being armed, guards his house; all his goods are in peace. But when one who is stronger than he shall come on him and overcome him, he takes away all his armor wherein he trusted and divides his spoil." This is a plain demonstration and type of the matter depicted after the manner of human affairs... Before the coming of the Savior, he was in great power, driving and shutting up in his own stall flocks that were not his own but belonging to God over all. He was like some voracious and most insolent robber. Since the Word of God who is above all, the Giver of all might and Lord of powers attacked him, having become man, all his goods have been plundered and his spoil divided. Those of old who had been

ensnared by him into ungodliness and error have been called by the holy apostles to the acknowledgment of the truth and been brought near to God the Father by faith in his Son. Commentary on Luke, Homily 81.

### **11:23 Those Who Reject Jesus**

#### **Satan is Not with Jesus.**

Cyril of Alexandria: "He that is not with me," he says, "is against me, and he that gathers not with me, scatters." "For I," he says, "have come to save every man from the hands of the devil and to deliver from his deceit those whom he had ensnared. I came to set the prisoners free, to give light to those in darkness, to raise up them that had fallen, to heal the broken-spirited, and to gather together the children of God who were scattered abroad. This was the object of my coming. Satan is not with me; on the contrary he is against me. He ventures to scatter those whom I have gathered and saved. How then can he, who wars against me and sets his wickedness in array against my purposes, give me power against himself? How is it not foolish even barely to imagine the possibility of such a thing as this?" Commentary on Luke, Homily 81.

### **11:24–26 Satan's Conqueror, Jesus**

#### **The Void Left by Satan's Absence.**

Cyril of Alexandria: That the Jewish crowds fall into such thoughts concerning Christ he makes plain by saying, "When the wicked spirit has gone out from the man, it returns with seven other spirits more bitter than itself, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." As long as they were in bondage in Egypt and lived according to the customs and laws of the Egyptians that were full of all impurity, they led polluted lives. An evil spirit dwelled in them, because it dwells in the hearts of the wicked. When in the mercy of God they had been delivered by Moses and received the law as a schoolmaster calling them to the light of the true knowledge of God, the impure and polluted spirit was driven out. Since they did not believe in Christ but rejected the Savior, the impure spirit again attacked them. He found their heart empty and devoid of all fear of God, swept and took up his dwelling in them. Commentary on Luke, Homily 81.



### **The House Swept Clean Must Remain Holy.**

Origen: The unclean spirit dwelt in us before we believed, before we came to Christ when our soul was still committing fornication against God and was with its lovers, the demons. Afterward it said, "I will return to my first husband," and came to Christ, who "created" it from the beginning "in his image." Necessarily the adulterous spirit gave up his place when it saw the legitimate husband. Christ received us, and our house has been "cleansed" from its former sins. It has been "furnished" with the furnishing of the sacraments of the faithful that they who have been initiated know. This house does not deserve to have Christ as its resident immediately unless its life and conduct are so holy, pure and incapable of being defiled that it deserves to be the "temple of God." It should not still be a house, but a temple in which God dwells. If it neglects the grace that was received and entangles itself in secular affairs, immediately that unclean spirit returns and claims the vacant house for itself. "It brings with it seven other spirits more wicked," so that it may not be able again to be expelled, "and the last state of that kind of person is worse than the first." It would be more tolerable that the soul would not have returned to its first husband once it became a prostitute than having gone back after confession to her husband, to have become an adulteress again. There is no "fellowship," as the apostle says, "between the temple of God and idols," no "agreement between Christ and Belial." Homilies on Exodus 8.4.

### **11:27–28 Blessings for Hearing and Keeping the Word**

#### **Mary Blessed by Faith.**

Augustine: Mary was more blessed in accepting the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ. To someone who said, "Blessed is the womb that bore you," he replied, "Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

Finally, for his brothers, his relatives according to the flesh who did not believe in him, of what advantage was that relationship? Even her maternal relationship would have done Mary no good unless she had borne Christ more happily in her heart than in her flesh. Holy Virginit 3.

#### **Those Who Worship Jesus are Blessed.**

Ephrem the Syrian: "Blessed is the womb that bore you." He took blessedness from the one who bore him and gave it to those who were worshiping him. It was with Mary for a certain time, but it would be with

those who worshiped him for eternity. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it."  
Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 11.10.