

Religion's Response to Authority

Luke chapter 11 records a very busy time in the ministry of Jesus. For three and a half years He was always working, but the pace of His ministry was accentuated at times, and this is one of those times.

He had been preaching the Sermon on the Mount, casting out devils, rebuking the Pharisees and going from synagogue to synagogue preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He stayed up all night ministering to people who had spirits of infirmity. He prayed for the sick, healed the lepers, raised the dead, walked on water and fed multitudes with hush puppies and sardines.

Everywhere Jesus went, people wanted Him to lay His hands upon them. He caused such a stir that the very things He preached—including being set free through deliverance—did two things: they brought Him the most criticism, and they gave Him the most fame. Jesus' radical ministry drove the common people to Him, and it drove away the religious people who could not stand the truth of the gospel. The same thing is true today. Preaching the full truth of the gospel will draw the hearts of the hungry and repel the hearts of the religious.

I thank God for my Christian upbringing and how my college and seminary taught me to love the Bible, but a time came when I had to take God out of the powerless denominational box. I finally had to open the Bible and read it anew while asking the Holy Spirit alone to teach me. My wife, Tai, never had to overcome religion. Her seminary involved climbing out of a ditch of addiction and falling into her secret place of intimacy with God. She's one of those people whose first honest reading of the Bible (and every reading thereafter) was led by the Holy Spirit alone, so no human teacher messed her

up with man-made doctrines.

When we discussed Scripture early on in our marriage, I envied Tai's literal view of the Word of God and her unadulterated understanding of the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit. Years later, her growing passion for these helped start me on this journey out of dead religion. I committed myself to reading the Bible with fresh eyes, to fast with genuine spiritual intent and to pray until I received the answers because I knew there was more to God than I had been told. Our key passage from Luke tells us there is much more to God than we have been taught, and we should ask for it.

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Now that God has answered, there is no going back; we simply know too much. God has opened the box, and we are not stuffing Him back in. We're going to set this nation on fire with the truth and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our commission. To go back now would be rebellion and disobedience to the clear teachings of the Word of God.

"And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven," (Luke 11:14-16).

Returning to our key passage, after Jesus tells the people there is more through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very next phrase says, "And he was casting out a devil," (v. 14). Notice how casual that transition was. He flowed from preaching the power of the Holy Spirit to casting out a devil.

Other Bible translations say, "Now he was casting out a demon," (ESV), so it's important to realize the immediacy of

the teaching and the act. Verse 14 continues, "When the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered." In modern vernacular that means they marveled; they were flabbergasted and were thinking, "What in the world just happened?" This man could not speak, and probably hadn't spoken in his entire life, yet when Jesus cast a mute spirit out of him, the man immediately began to speak.

It was a clear miracle from God to them, and people still have the same response of shock and wonder when they see demons leave a person today. As commonplace as it should be, it is still a miracle from God, and we should never minimize that.
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