



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 12:22-37

Topic

Jesus' exorcisms proved He had the power and the authority to bind Satan and hold him captive

Title

"Tying Up Loose Fiends"

Introduction

Notorious serial killer Ted Bundy escaped from custody twice in 1977 - the second time with horrifying consequences. He killed three more women before being re-apprehended.

His first escape was facilitated by the judge ordering the jailers to remove Bundy's shackles while he was acting as his own attorney.

If only he could have remained bound, at least some of the evil he perpetrated would never have happened.

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Matthew 12:22-37

"Tying Up Loose Fiends"

What if I told you that the world's most heinous murderer and notorious perpetrator of evil was once bound but that he was allowed to, in a sense, escape to continue his reign of terror?

Jesus said, "how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

The "strong man" Jesus was referencing was Satan. We'll see in a moment that this statement was to show the leaders of Israel that Jesus had both the power and the authority to "bind" Satan - to overthrow him and his kingdom of darkness and establish His own kingdom on the earth.

Sadly, the leaders of Israel would reject both their King and His kingdom. In doing so, as collateral damage, Satan remained unbound to roam free to go on murdering, robbing, and destroying all over the earth.

Jesus is coming back a second time and in His Second Coming He **will** "bind" Satan:

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Rev 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him...

In-between the first and second comings of Jesus we're warned, "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil **walks about** like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (First Peter 5:8).

As Jesus and the leaders of Israel reach a watershed moment, in which The Lord says there can be no neutrality - you're either with Him or against Him - we can find comfort in knowing that the currently unbound devil will one day be bound.

In the mean time - and they seem to be **extremely 'mean' times** - we want to be conquerors, not casualties. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Are A Conqueror If You Are With Jesus, and #2 You'll Be A Casualty If You Are Against Jesus.

#1 You Are A Conqueror If You Are With Jesus

(22-30)

When something particularly awful occurs, it's common for someone to say that the people involved "look like they've been through a war," or that the landscape "looked like a war zone."

Our entire planet, and even the atmosphere around it, IS a war zone. It is a war zone because Satan is unbound.

The devil is called "the god of this world" (Second Corinthians 4:4). He is called "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). He is called "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2).

He's not alone. He rules over fallen angels we call demons who are organized in military hierarchies for battle; "principalities... powers... the rulers of the darkness of this world... spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

They're out to rob, to kill and to destroy.

Jesus was and is our only hope, our only help, against these fierce foes. With Him, we are more than conquerors.

Keep all that in mind as we study this turning point not just in the history of Israel but in the history of the world.

Mat 12:22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

Not all disease or illness is the direct result of the devil or of demonic possession. But some conditions *can* be caused by demons; and that was the case with this poor blind mute.

Note the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in healing him. He could not see to find Jesus, nor speak to ask for mercy, yet by grace The Lord met him in his need.

Mat 12:23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

The word for "amazed" is a fun one. It could be translated, "the crowds were going wild."

Some were starting to wonder if Jesus might not be the Messiah promised to Israel in their Scriptures. It was this wild interest in Jesus that prompted the Pharisees to issue an official response.

Mat 12:24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

There are two fascinating insights here:

1. First we would note that they did not refute the fact that a genuine exorcism had occurred. Their worldview included angels and demons. They knew God was at war with supernatural enemies and that the conflict was being waged on the earth, affecting the human race.
2. Second we notice that the Jews understood that the demons were under the leadership of one particular individual.

We sometimes miss the obvious because we have a wrong, or an incomplete, worldview. When looking at the world, and the events in it, we must take into account the entire 'world' God created, including the angels and the fallen angels, who are at war with God.

For example people are stressed over UFO's and alien abductions. It's demons messin' with us.

On the other hand, we can get too interested in demons and start blaming everything on the devil. It's not always easy, but we need to maintain a balance, and the Bible can help us.

The Pharisees accused Jesus of being in cahoots with "Beelzebub." It was the name of a Canaanite deity which had come in Judaism to stand for the leader of the demonic realm.

Mat 12:25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Mat 12:26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

Jesus identifies the leader of the demons as none other than Satan.

This was a nice way of saying that their reasoning was stupid. Truth is, you might be willing to sacrifice some of your own forces on a limited basis if it could fool your enemies and gain you an advantage.

What the Pharisees were missing here, and what we want to emphasize, is that Jesus wasn't just going around casting out a few demons here-and-there. **He had declared war on Satan and on his kingdom and was destroying his strongholds left and right. He was casting out demons *legions* at a time.**

Jesus was offering to set-up a rival kingdom, *not* trying to take over Satan's.

This was no strategy of the devil's; Jesus was crushing his head. He had Satan cornered. The devil could hear the rattling of the chains that would bind him.

Jesus had a second argument:

Mat 12:27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

Their "sons," meaning followers of the Pharisees, also went about trying to exorcise demons. There's no indication whether they were successful or not - only that the Pharisees approved of it. Their "sons" would think the Pharisee's conclusion a terrible accusation and a false, offensive argument.

Jesus next made a declaration:

Mat 12:28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

"If" here means "since." *Since* Jesus was casting out demons by the Spirit of God, it was proof that He was their King and that He could establish the kingdom.

This was it; the moment Jewish history had been moving towards for centuries.

Mat 12:29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Jesus pictured the world as Satan's "house" and Satan as the "strong man" guarding his house. The exorcisms Jesus had been performing on such a massive scale showed that He was capable of binding the strong man and taking back everything he had stolen. What Adam forfeited to Satan in Eden was about to be reclaimed by the Second Adam.

Jesus was going to destroy the works of the devil, overthrow his kingdom of darkness, and set up His own reign of righteousness.

Mat 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

There is a lot of disagreement on exactly what Jesus was referring to - whether He was using an illustration of sheep or of a harvest or both.

Doesn't really matter; you get the point. It was Go-time. This was it; decide. Receive King and kingdom as a conqueror or reject King and kingdom and suffer enormous casualties.

Tragically, the Jews would choose door #2.

The devil got away, so to speak. He avoided being bound. Instead he roams - he and his forces. He *will* be bound, make no mistake. But today he is free to wreak havoc.

God remains in charge of the universe but instead of the literal, physical kingdom of God on the earth, our planet is a war zone.

The outcome of the conflict was settled once-for-all on the Cross when Jesus defeated Satan. But the battles rage on until the devil is bound at the Second Coming.

I won't go into it in detail, because I have previously in our studies in Matthew, but a good illustration of the spiritual battles that rage on despite Christ's decisive victory is the D-Day invasion of World War Two. It essentially ended the war, but battles raged on for another year, racking-up casualties.

The age in which we live is like that. The Cross was D-Day; the devil was defeated. But he rages on until The Lord returns.

Our confidence and hope is in knowing two things:

1. One is that someday the victory over Satan and the cessation of all evil that flows from him shall be realized.
2. The other is that whatever evil might befall us we are already "more than conquerors through Jesus Christ" and His love, **and** He will redeem for good all things we must endure.

#2 You'll Be A Casualty If You Are Against Jesus

(v31-37)

Jesus lets them know just how serious their choice to receive or reject Him would be. We should pay close attention, because the choice is no less serious for us.

Mat 12:31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Mat 12:32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

I don't know any Christian who isn't terrified the first time they hear about an 'unpardonable sin.' Rest assured: if you're worried you might commit it, *it is evidence you **can't** commit it.*

Here is what I mean. God the Holy Spirit is with everyone in the world to convict them of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgment to come. He points them to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and to receive eternal life. You "blaspheme" the Holy Spirit when you reject the truth He is revealing to you through the Gospel about Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done to save you. If you've received The Lord, you've believed, not blasphemed, the Holy Spirit and **you cannot commit this sin.**

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit isn't one specific sin. You blaspheme the Holy Spirit by fully, finally rejecting Jesus Christ, refusing His forgiveness of your sins, and dying in them.

God does not forgive us one sin at a time. At the Cross you receive forgiveness of **all** sins - past, present and future. Therefore every sinner is a candidate for conversion until death ends his or her opportunity to receive the forgiveness of the Cross.

Here's another quick assurance: there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

The point Jesus was making was that the Holy Spirit was revealing to Israel that Her King was on the earth to establish their kingdom. But they must receive Him to realize its establishment.

Mat 12:33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

Please note the either/or quality of what Jesus was saying. There was, there is, no room for neutrality; there can be no sitting on the fence.

He was comparing Israel to a fruit tree - perhaps the fig tree? They would either receive Him and thereby produce good fruit as He established the kingdom, or bad fruit as they rejected it and let Satan go free.

Mat 12:34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

A "brood of vipers" are the offspring of a viper. Jesus was letting them know pretty directly that they were of the devil.

Their accusations against Him, their blaspheming the Holy Spirit, proved they were "evil" like Satan. Their words revealed their essential nature.

Mat 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

This is another way of saying the same thing only using "treasure" to speak more about actions. In this case, the Pharisees, by their actions, were revealing they were evil.

Mat 12:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Mat 12:37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Before we get too overwhelmed by this, realize that Jesus was talking to, and that these verses apply to, nonbelievers. A believer is under no threat of "condemnation" by virtue of Jesus having taken everything upon Himself at the Cross.

Our words *are* important, for sure; we are told to season our speech with grace, and to speak as the oracles of God. Our words will either earn us rewards at the Reward Seat of Jesus, or they will be burned away. But we face no future condemnation.

A nonbeliever has no such protection. If you are not saved before you die, after death you face a judgment. Your own words will judge you - especially those spoken either in your heart or aloud that rejected the forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ.

Have you seen those commercials for State Farm insurance? Those insured by State Farm only need to sing, "like a good neighbor, State Farm is there," and their agent appears to take care of everything on their behalf. Those with insurance other than State Farm have no such representation and face disaster on their own.

After you die, you need representation. You need the Father to see you in Jesus Christ, declared righteous by grace through faith in Him. Otherwise, you'll be on your own to face the disaster of sin.

These Pharisees, these leaders of Israel, were not just rejecting their King and the kingdom, as terrible as that was. They weren't just letting Satan go unbound, as heinous and negligent as that was. They were rejecting personal salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

They were choosing to blaspheme the Holy Spirit and spend eternity in Hell that was created for the devil and his angels.

Nonbelievers condemn themselves and God confirms what they have chosen. Take the Pharisees, for example. By the time of this confrontation, they had rejected the witness of John the Baptist; the witness of God the Father speaking from Heaven; the prophecies of their own Scriptures; and Jesus' own testimony about Who He was.

Now they were rejecting and blaspheming God the Holy Spirit.

Nonbeliever - you are rejecting the witness of creation, which declares the glory of a Creator. You are rejecting the witness of your own conscience, which tells you there is eternity in your heart. And you are rejecting the direct presentation of the Gospel.

If you die rejecting, you will be judged and condemned. Receive The Lord!