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## Luke Chapter 11

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**Abstract:** A commentary on the events of Luke 11, accompanied by parallel columns of the King James translation of the chapter alongside a new rendition.



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# Luke Chapter 11

## INTRODUCTION

The topics of this chapter may seem disparate, but a unity does exist. This unity consists of contrasts, beginning with the Savior's treatment of prayer (see 11:1–13), which leads to light and enlightenment (see 11:33–36), and ends with his condemnation of those who in effect are “full of darkness” (11:34) and do not allow others to come to the light (see 11:37–52). A unity also lies in the dramatic swing from lofty concerns for prayer, preserving one's home, honoring Christ, and receiving light (see 11:1–36), to its opposite that is represented by those who should be religious and should be receiving light but in fact smother it by putting it “in a secret place” or “under a bushel” (11:33). Such people are so far from the light that, darkly, they have come to honor their forebears who bear responsibility for killing the prophets (see 11:47–48).

The first part of this chapter links back to themes that arise in the story of Mary and Martha (see 10:38–42), that is, prayer and home, which we have noticed (see 11:1–28; the Analysis on 10:38–42). The matter of prayer comes up in Jesus' response to his disciples' plea that he “teach [them] to pray” (11:1–4); in Jesus' story about the importuning friend at midnight (see 11:5–8); and finally in the series of lessons that he draws from this story (see 11:9–13).<sup>1</sup> The concern for home and household stands forth in Jesus' reply to those who say that he controls devils by the power of Beelzebub (see 11:14–20); in his reference to the strong man and “his palace” (see 11:21–23); in his story about the banished unclean spirit (see 11:24–26); and finally in the allusion to Jesus' home in the words of the woman who praises his mother (see 11:27–28).

The second section has to do with judgment (see 11:29–54). Luke presents this doctrine both in Jesus' warnings to “people [who] were gathered

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1. Fitzmyer holds a similar view (*Luke*, 2:896).

thick together” (11:29) and in his interchange with prominent individuals at a dinner where he is a guest (see 11:37–54). Thus, we gain the sense that Jesus teaches this precept not only to those who seek to hear him but also to those—Pharisees and lawyers—who may see themselves as distant from, even above, him.

The message in Jesus’ reference to the stories of Jonah and the queen of Sheba is clear. Gentiles, whom the Ninevites and the queen represent, respond to spiritual stimuli in a way that people of Jesus’ generation do not, thus bringing to these Gentiles the blessings of God. In their own way, these stories point backward to Jesus’ first recorded announcement of who he is in the Nazareth synagogue, when he features stories about Gentiles who reap God’s rewards—the widow of Sidon who hosts Elijah and Naaman the leprous Syrian general (see 4:24–27). They also look back to the calling of the Seventy who spend the days of their ministries partly among Gentiles. In an important, heavenly touch that brims with promise, Jesus affirms that those who will come to understand that “a greater than Solomon is here” will find that their “whole body also is full of light” (11:31, 34).

In a contrast of sorts, we are surprised at the vehemence of Jesus’ interchange with Pharisees and lawyers. In another similar setting—a meal—Jesus shows himself to be more civil in demeanor and willing to teach lawyers and Pharisees (see 14:1–24). But we must reckon that these people are hard to convince. And Jesus’ fierceness might grow out of the observation that some do not respond to gentle prodding. A parallel situation might be Abinadi’s strong words against the priests of Noah from whose number Alma emerges as a believer (see Mosiah 12:25–29; 16:13–15; 17:2).

## **THE LORD’S PRAYER**

### **(11:1–4)**

(Compare Matt. 6:9–13)

#### **King James Translation**

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy

#### **New Rendition**

1 And it came to pass as he was praying in a certain place, when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” 2 And he said to them, “Whenever you pray, say, ‘Father, may your name be made holy. May your

name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

kingdom come. 3 Give us our needed bread each day. 4 And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves are even forgiving everyone who is indebted to us, and do not bring us into a time of trial.”

## Notes

**11:1 as he was praying in a certain place:** Luke’s imprecise language demonstrates that he draws much of his “journey” section, 9:51 to 19:27, from a pool of Jesus’ teachings that are not connected to a specific time and place. The Joseph Smith Translation substitutes the name Jesus for the pronoun *he*, clarifying the assumed subject of the clause.

**one of his disciples:** From Luke’s retelling, it seems that this person is not one who follows and hears Jesus from early in his ministry. Why? Matthew records that Jesus teaches the prayer which follows on the earlier occasion of the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 6:9–13). Hence, whoever makes the request evidently does not hear Jesus utter this earlier, model prayer.

**Lord:** The title (Greek *kyrios*) can signal a title of respect like Master. It also recalls the Septuagint word for Jehovah and may give the disciple’s request a decided sacred sense (see the Notes on 5:8 and 10:1).<sup>2</sup>

**as John also taught his disciples:** Because of this notice, the following prayer (see 11:2–4) may well reflect the Baptist’s teachings on prayer to his followers. If so, the two men’s teachings about prayer are very close (see Matt. 6:9–13 for Jesus’ similar model for prayer). We wonder whether the disciple who makes the request is a former follower of John, or at least knows Jesus has received baptism at John’s hand. Notably, the tense of the verb “to teach” (Greek *didaskō*) is aorist, the simple past, and indicates either that only once does John teach his disciples to pray or, more probably, that John’s teachings are now in the past because of his death.

**11:2 Our Father which art:** As in Matthew 6:9, the Joseph Smith Translation warms up the expression by rendering these words as, “Our Father who art” (JST 11:2).

**Father:** Some early manuscripts, including the earliest,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , repeat the simple name, without the possessive “our” and without the expression

2. TDNT, 3:1058–62, 1086–93; 5:273; TLNT, 2:341–52.

“which art in heaven.” The appearance of these additional elements, therefore, must be due to later copyists who seek to harmonize Luke’s record with Matthew 6:9. From other passages, it appears that early Christians indeed adopt this form of addressing God, calling him by the intimate Hebrew name *Abba*, as does Jesus before them (see 10:21; 22:42; Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). This is not characteristic of ancient Jewish prayers. Hence, Jesus introduces his disciples to a new element in prayer that will bring them into a close, personal relationship with God.<sup>3</sup>

**Hallowed be thy name:** The verb, a passive imperative, is addressed to God and asks him that his name be made sacred or holy in our lives: “Let thy name become holy.” God, of course, is already holy. The point has to do with how we conduct our relationship with him. In direct appeals such as prayer, the term “thy name” can stand in place of God himself.<sup>4</sup>

**Thy kingdom come:** As with the prior expression, the verb here is an imperative spoken to the Father: “Let thy kingdom come.”

**Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth:** Many early manuscripts, including P<sup>75</sup>, the earliest, omit this expression. Although the question of its originality cannot be solved decisively, it appears that these words may well have been added by a later copyist on the model of Matthew 6:10.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the case, they stand in harmony with and elaborate what is needed so that God’s kingdom can indeed come.<sup>6</sup>

**11:3 Give:** The imperative form of the verb, in the present tense, offers the sense of regular and continual giving without stopping.<sup>7</sup> The imperative, addressed to the Father, is a bold form of speech. One would expect a more reverential approach, such as, “We beseech thee,” or the like. But Jesus’ intent to reveal God as his Father shrinks the psychological and spiritual distance between humans and their God (see the Note on 11:2).

**our daily bread:** One thinks of the Israelites’ dependence on God for their daily manna in the desert (see Ex. 16:11–31). The term translated “daily” (Greek *epiousios*) has caused discussion since antiquity because of its rarity outside of its appearance in this prayer. Among the meanings proposed for it are “essential,” “daily,” and “future,”<sup>8</sup> perhaps conveying the

3. *TDNT*, 5:984–85, 989, 1006; Marshall, *Luke*, 456–57; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:902–3.

4. *TDNT*, 5:270, 273; *TDOT*, 15:136; Marshall, *Luke*, 457; Morris, *Luke*, 211.

5. Marshall, *Luke*, 458; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:904.

6. Johnson, *Luke*, 177.

7. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §319; Marshall, *Luke*, 459; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:904.

8. *TDNT*, 2:590–99; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:904–6.

sense that we ask for bread for today so that we come to trust that we shall receive bread tomorrow.

**11:4 *forgive us our sins:*** Jesus' model here instructs disciples to ask the Father specifically for a forgiveness of sins, one of the miracles of the Atonement. Jesus, of course, has been offering forgiveness to some whom he has healed, including the man with palsy and the "sinner" woman (see 5:20; 7:48). In the earlier version of the Lord's prayer, he instructs his disciples to ask for a broader forgiveness, that of debts owed to another, including God, which can include sins that distance the transgressor from God (see Matt. 6:9–13).

***for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us:*** This expression puts forward the reason that petitioners ask for forgiveness: "because we forgive, we therefore seek forgiveness." In this pattern, a person's actions, so to speak, are very much a prerequisite to an appeal to God for merciful assistance.

***lead us not into temptation:*** The sense is, "preserve us from severe trial." The term rendered "temptation" (Greek *peirasmos*) may carry the sense of temptation to commit sin (see 4:13; 22:40, 46) or the sense of trial (see 8:13; 22:28).<sup>9</sup> The Joseph Smith Translation changes the entire meaning of this expression, rendering it: "let us not be led unto temptation" (JST 11:4). Doctrinally, it becomes clear that God does not lead us into temptation, implying that he is the refuge from such an experience (see 22:46).

***but deliver us from evil:*** This clause is missing in some of the early manuscripts of Luke, including  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , the earliest. In its form here, the expression is the same as that in Matthew 6:13 where the sense is, "deliver us from the evil one," evidently meaning Satan. At this point, the Joseph Smith Translation adds an entire set of lines: "for thine is the kingdom and power. Amen. And he [Jesus] said unto them, Your heavenly Father will not fail to give unto you whatsoever ye ask of him" (JST 11:4–5). Observing the general harmonization of the first line with Matthew 6:13, we also note that the JST is not identical to Matthew's record, likely pointing to a restoration of original intent in Luke's report.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the JST addition offers reassurance in the strongest terms that God will answer prayers, thus giving the disciples all the more reason to pray.

9. BAGD, 646; *TLNT*, 3:84–86.

10. David A. LeFevre, "The Sermon on the Mount in the Joseph Smith Translation," in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 292–93.

## Analysis

The Savior's teaching about prayer, closely mirroring his words about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 6:9–13), sits snugly in a context framed first by Martha's petition to Jesus and then by his further teachings about seeking earnestly, all pointing to prayer (see 10:40; 11:5–13). The tenor of the whole raises prayer to an experience that rests on a warm relationship with the Father rather than dealing with a distant God who stands aloof and must be coaxed by an endless series of gifts. In a word, the Father holds himself accessible to a petitioner. He will respond to any and all, as he does to his Son. Remarkably, the passage hints that the Baptist has taught his disciples similarly and shows that John is already dead.

Jesus' model for prayer deals with two aspects of a person's life, the spiritual and the temporal.<sup>11</sup> To open the first, a person acknowledges God as Father and that he inhabits a heavenly place. For, in the heart of Jesus' language, one perceives that God resides in a celestial locale.<sup>12</sup> He is not everywhere, in some loose spatial sense.

In harmony with this perception, borne of an acknowledgment that the Father indeed is "in heaven," the worshiper essentially petitions that the celestial order not only comes in the distant future but also, in the here and now, becomes a part of our lives. That is, in harmony with the purposes of this order, we pray that God's kingdom will indeed come to us, as the following words detail. For by arriving and influencing us, with gifts and blessings to bestow, God's kingdom grows as a feature relevant in our lives, challenging us as devotees to measure ourselves against divine standards that bring us within the embrace of a heaven-led life.

The spiritual aspect finds companionship in the temporal. For human realities bring persons to deal with "our daily bread" and "our sins" and "temptation." From earliest times, God shows interest in touching individuals' earthly lives by offering instructions that touch on food and wealth and sacrifices that celebrate God's gifts of such items. For example, he directs Adam to earn his food by "the sweat of [his] face" (Gen. 3:19; Moses 4:25), which he does, even teaching his children to follow suit (see Moses 5:1, 3). Then he commands Adam and Eve to offer sacrifice on the increase of their flocks (see Moses 5:5), which they and their children do (see Gen. 4:3–4; Moses 5:5, 19–20). In later eras, God involves himself in giving instructions

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11. Marshall, *Luke*, 457, calls the two aspects "God's purposes" and "personal needs."

12. Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 127, 129.

about what foods a person should and should not eat (see Lev. 11; D&C 89; also Dan. 1:3–16). Such occurrences highlight an underlying heavenly concern with temporal matters among humans.

Questions have arisen among scholars about the originality of the Lord’s prayer in the context where Luke places it, especially because it largely duplicates Jesus’ words on prayer in his Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 6:9–13) and because it shows evidence of later copyists’ tampering.<sup>13</sup> The questions reduce themselves to whether or not Jesus serves up the same teaching twice or whether Matthew and Luke simply draw from a common source and, after making their own adjustments, insert Jesus’ prayer into different contexts. In response, nothing requires that Jesus speak the same or similar words on one occasion only. To limit him in this artificial way goes against shared experiences among noted teachers, including those in antiquity, who frequently repeat themselves. Further, the settings sketched by Matthew and Luke differ so remarkably from one another that they argue for different occasions yet similar instruction.<sup>14</sup>

## THE PLEADING FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT (11:5–10) (COMPARE MATT. 7:7–8)

### King James Translation

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

### New Rendition

5 And he said to them, “Which of you will have a friend and will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread. 6 Because a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’ 7 And he answering from within will say, ‘Do not trouble me. The door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed. I

13. Beare, *Earliest Records of Jesus*, 161; Bultmann, *History*, 334; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:897–98.

14. Plummer, *Luke*, 293, 437; Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8, 115, 202; William Barclay, *The First Three Gospels* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 135, 238–39; Marshall, *Luke*, 456, 701.



8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

cannot get up and give you.’ 8 I say to you, although he will not rise up and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will give to him as much as he needs.

9 “And I say to you, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

## Notes

**11:5 *he said unto them:*** The Joseph Smith Translation changes this simple transition that leads into the following story by adding a summarizing sentence on the lips of Jesus that gives shape to what follows: “Your heavenly Father will not fail to give unto you whatsoever ye ask of him.” Then it inserts the expression, “he spake a parable, saying” (JST 11:5). Such additions tell us more clearly that Jesus will be setting out an illustration that graphically reflects God’s pattern of action, particularly his response to prayers.

***a friend:*** Jesus now relates a story that involves two homes and the fathers in each. The term (Greek *philos*) embraces both neighborliness and, more deeply, the sharing of the other person’s fortune or misfortune. In other words, a person’s friend stands almost as close as a brother or sister and elicits a response that is sacred in its nature.<sup>15</sup>

***at midnight:*** Except in the homes of the wealthy, life is typically governed by the sun’s rising and setting. Hence, Jesus’ detail about midnight—not meaning exactly 12:00 but the middle of the night (Greek *mesonyktion*)<sup>16</sup>—sets the story at the most inopportune time of the night.

**11:6 *a friend of mine in his journey:*** This third occurrence of the term *friend* underscores the web of personal relationships in the story, effectively tying the three men together: the man in bed, the host, and the traveler. The man who comes “in his journey” is more than a mere guest with needs, not only because he is away from home but because he holds a further, more meaningful claim based on friendship.

15. TDNT, 9:159–64.

16. BAGD, 508.

**11:7 *Trouble me not:*** The first response of the man in bed is one of convenience and custom, to put off his friend until morning. After all, no one is moving around in the town at this hour.

***I cannot rise and give thee:*** One suspects that the man in bed already anticipates that he will have to arise and meet the demands of his importuning friend because he does not deny that he has bread in his house. But by responding in this way he tries to avoid doing so, although his answer is completely out of character in the ancient Orient.<sup>17</sup>

**11:8 *I say unto you:*** What Jesus will now say carries the full weight of his authority and personality (see the Notes on 3:8; 6:27). As he previously promises that “Your heavenly Father will not fail to give unto you whatsoever ye ask of him,” (JST 11:5), so now he speaks with a reassuring certainty that only he can offer (see the Note on 11:9).

***because of his importunity he will rise:*** Here lies Jesus’ main point. Friendship will carry so far, yet not enough to overcome the man’s inertia who lies in bed. But insistent imploring will. In fact, Jesus’ words imply strongly that the man standing at the door is raising such a racket that no one can sleep anyway.

**11:9 *I say unto you:*** Jesus’ prior utterance of these words brings significant weight to the point of his story about the importuning man (see the Note on 11:8). Now he draws a general lesson from that story and grounds it in his authority to speak definitively about the promised and promising results of prayer. Incidentally, this verse, or its counterpart in Matthew 7:7, lies in Joseph Smith’s mind when he decides whether to pray to God to solve his youthful confusion about matters of true religion.<sup>18</sup>

***Ask:*** The form of this verb, and the following two, is the present imperative. Together, they convey the sense of continuing, sustained action rather than one-time efforts only, thus encouraging both hearers and readers to persist in their prayers, as in other contexts (see 2 Ne. 32:4; D&C 8:9–11; etc.), just as beggars are persistent in their pleas.<sup>19</sup>

***it shall be given:*** Picking up the thread of giving from the prior story (see 11:7–8), the verb “to give” (Greek *didōmi*) occurs in a wide variety of situations in Luke’s report. Among those that naturally draw a reader’s attention

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17. Jeremias, *Parables*, 158–59.

18. Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 75.

19. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§36–335; Jeremias, *Parables*, 159–60; Morris, *Luke*, 214.

are Jesus' promise that giving means receiving a full measure in return (see 6:38), his statement about a person's spiritual state, "whosoever hath, to him shall be given [more]" (8:18), his giving of "power and authority" to the Twelve and the Seventy (9:1; 10:19), and his giving of a life-sustaining meal to the five thousand through the Twelve (see 9:16). Hence, Jesus' declaration draws to itself both a rich set of promises and corroborating, concrete experiences. At the end of his ministry, he revisits this matter and assures his followers that "unto every one which hath shall be given," drawing attention to how disciples treat the divine assets that they receive (see 19:26). In this connection, according to modern scripture the Lord gives to those who "are purified and cleansed from all sin" (D&C 50:29–30).

***seek, and ye shall find:*** This couplet lies at the base of the experience of the shepherds (see 2:16) and Jesus' stories about the lost sheep and lost coin (see 15:4–6, 8–9). Such links in the Gospel make his point both vivid and reassuringly real.

***knock:*** The verb "to knock" (Greek *krouō*) occurs infrequently in the New Testament, but all instances stand in important contexts, including that of believers seeking access to the Lord (see 13:25), and that of Jesus standing at the door and seeking access to them (see 12:36; Rev. 3:20; also Acts 12:13, 16).<sup>20</sup> The image of one knocking, of course, ties back to Jesus' story about the importuning man at the door of his friend (see 11:5–8).

***it shall be opened:*** The vivid proof of this statement rests in the story of the importuning man who will receive the loaves of bread that he asks for (see 11:8). In another vein, the connections to Luke's larger account bring importance to the act of opening, for they certify divine action. For example, by a power outside of Zacharias, his mouth and ears are miraculously opened (see the Note on 1:64); at Jesus' baptism, "the heaven was opened" to him (3:21); an angel "opened the prison doors" to free the Apostles (Acts 5:19); and the heavens are opened to Stephen's gaze as he slips into death (see Acts 7:56). The divine act of opening is emphasized in a later story of divine closing and missed opportunities (see 13:24–28). Modern scripture informs us that our repentance is to precede the divine action of opening to us (see D&C 49:26).

**11:10 *every one:*** The word (Greek *pas*) is a collective term that means all, signaling that there will be no exceptions: each person who asks and seeks and knocks—a collective of verbs whose common tense manifests persistent actions—will receive an answer to prayers, even if negative.<sup>21</sup>

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20. *TDNT*, 3:954–57.

21. Morris, *Luke*, 214.

## Analysis

Lost in this memorable story is the Savior's more than subtle emphasis on the home. For the main characters are fathers and the action affects their homes and families—the one family receives a late-arriving guest and the other is awakened by a noisy request for bread. Both fathers model for their children what they should do, as in the next illustration (see 11:11–13)—in one instance, becoming the generous, welcoming host; in the other, getting out of bed and helping a friend, even if grumbling.

On another level, persistence forms the motto in this story. In this brief account, Jesus captures the essence of prayer: its success requires consistent and sustained effort. The importuning man succeeds not because of the goodwill of his friend who is already in bed—and there is plenty of goodwill—but because he persists in knocking and imploring at the friend's door. In the end, his friend cannot deny him. To be sure, the request is modest: only three loaves of bread. But the reason for the request, the arrival of an unexpected guest, demands the importuning host's immediate and, if needed, sustained action. The hour of the day, midnight in this case, does not ultimately count but cleverly adds to the drama of the story. Even so, at the edge of Jesus' notation about the time of day rests the reassurance that God is available at any time and in any circumstance.

The point about persistence in prayer does not stand in cool isolation in Luke's Gospel but will receive strong reinforcement when, later in Jesus' ministry, he will repeat another story that carries the same message: the widow who persists in requesting a judge to settle a dispute. She bothers him with her constant pleading, effectively forcing him to act on her case so that he will be rid of her (see 18:1–6). Her tireless effort, that of "continual coming" to the judge (18:5), underscores the virtue of dogged persistence in prayer.

Because Jesus' sayings about asking and knocking, as well as his following points about giving good gifts to children (see 11:11–13), appear in a different context in Matthew's Gospel, namely, the Sermon on the Mount (see 7:7–11), some conclude that Luke and Matthew draw from a common source and place these words in contexts that suit their own purposes.<sup>22</sup> But an earlier point is worth making again. To assume that Jesus speaks certain words on only one occasion during his three-year ministry runs against common experience with noted teachers in any age and forms a

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22. Marshall, *Luke*, 466; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:913–14.

terribly limiting view of his teaching ability. It is just as likely that Jesus teaches a set of principles more than once during his ministry and that the evangelists are being true to the information that they know. Good teachers repeat frequently, adapting their teachings regularly to fresh circumstances (see John 13:16 and 15:20).

## PRAYER

### (11:11–13)

(Compare Matt. 7:9–11)

#### King James Translation

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

#### New Rendition

11 Should a son ask one of you who is a father for a fish, would he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or should he ask for an egg, would he give him a scorpion? 13 Therefore, if you, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

## Notes

**11:11** *If a son shall ask bread . . . will he give him a stone?:* Jesus shifts his discussion about prayer back into the home by envisioning an interaction between a father and son (see the Note on 11:5; the Analysis on 11:5–10). The first part of this verse appears to be borrowed from Matthew 7:9. The manuscripts of Luke show a variety of readings in this passage which illustrate that the text has undergone change. Moreover, the earliest manuscripts,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , omit the words about bread and a stone (“shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if . . .”). To be sure, this initial but questionable statement breathes the spirit of Jesus’ intent, but he does not appear to utter these words on this occasion.

*a serpent:* Such a creature represents merely a theoretical gift from a parent to a child, one that is completely out of character and stands as an overstatement by Jesus to illustrate the point that he will make in 11:13 about the “good gifts” from our heavenly Father. Even if a reader thinks

of a serpent-like creature such as an eel, caught inadvertently by a fisher,<sup>23</sup> Jesus' aim in this saying is not diminished.

**11:12 *a scorpion*:** To add an emphasis that likely shocks his hearers, Jesus turns their minds to a second reprehensible example of a parent offering to a child a hurtful, deadly gift. This notion contrasts with the gods worshiped in the Roman World who deal with people capriciously.

**11:13 *being evil*:** Within Jesus' words lies the concept that humans are unable of themselves to be fully good in the ultimate sense, even though they give good gifts to their children (see the Note on 11:29). Hence, they need someone to assist.

***your children*:** Jesus draws on the family as the place of giving and receiving good gifts. Thereby, he ties us to a "heavenly Father" with whom we share a deep, enduring family relationship.

***how much more*:** Here lies the main point of Jesus' set of illustrations about answers to a person's prayer: our heavenly Father will give much better gifts to us than we give to one another.

***your heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit*:** Jesus has just listed a series of gifts that one person can give to another. It seems clear that he saves the best gift to the end. In this connection, the Joseph Smith Translation makes an important adjustment, changing this expression to "your heavenly Father [will] give good gifts, through the Holy Spirit," thus establishing God as the real source of "good gifts" (JST 11:14). In addition, Jesus' promise here of the Father's nurturing response brings closure to his teachings on prayer, which reach back and give clearer meaning to the incident involving Mary and Martha (see 10:38–42) and to his example of proper prayer (see 11:2–4). The ending of the beatitude in 3 Nephi 12:6 about hungering after righteousness may be relevant here: "they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost" (also JST Matt. 5:8).

## Analysis

As before, the Savior brings us inside a home (see 11:5–8), in this case to witness interactions between a father and son. Thereby he lays emphasis on the family and home as the irreplaceable locale for meaningful relationships. To be sure, he is merely illustrating a point about Heavenly Father answering prayers. But his choice of illustration is compelling. He does

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23. Marshall, *Luke*, 468.

not draw attention to the world of commerce; he does not appeal to the religious establishment. He turns to the home.

At the top of his list, Jesus compellingly illustrates that God will give both more generously and regularly than humans do. He frames this divine gift-giving within the larger picture of prayer, if we will only ask and knock. To achieve his end, he speaks in hyperbole, in exaggerated terms. It is silliness, of course, to think that a parent might give evil, hurtful gifts to a child. But because of the way that Jesus presents his ideas, centering them on parents and children, these ideas will remain immovable in the memory of those who hear and those who learn of these words from the hearers. To help hearers to grasp his point, he directs their thoughts to common food-stuffs as the good gifts (fish, egg) and, as evil gifts, to creatures that do not, and cannot, serve as food for them (serpent, scorpion).

Because Jesus sets out a similar list of contrasts in his Sermon on the Mount, one comes back to the question whether Matthew and Luke are simply drawing from a common source and inserting Jesus' words into a place of their own choosing.<sup>24</sup> In response, we notice that the manuscripts of Luke 11:11 show evidence of copyists adding the words from Matthew 7:9 about the bread and stone. Hence, it appears that originally the form of the saying is not identical in the two Gospels. This possibility should give pause to those who claim a common origin. In this light, we note that the order of the contrasting pairs in Luke is evidently *fish* and *serpent*, *egg* and *scorpion*, ending with the gift of *the Holy Spirit*. Matthew's listing differs, reading *bread* and *stone*, *fish* and *serpent*, concluding with *good things* (see Matt. 7:9–11). Even if we were to penetrate Jesus' preferences for illustrating his teachings in one way or another, we cannot determine which of these lists is more original. The variation alone undercuts the conclusion that Jesus only one time teaches about the gifts that come from prayer, that only one time does he illustrate his point by talking about parents giving gifts to children. More naturally, we conclude that Jesus speaks similar words on different occasions, just as noted teachers do.<sup>25</sup>

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24. Beare, *Earliest Records of Jesus*, 66, 162–63; Barclay, *First Three Gospels*, 134, 138–39; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:913–14.

25. Plummer, *Luke*, 437; *TDNT*, 2:631, n. 29; 4:326; Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8, 115, 202; Marshall, *Luke*, 701; Morris, *Luke*, 299; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 286.

## HOMES AND HOUSEHOLDS (11:14–28)

(Compare Matt. 12:22–30, 43–45; Mark 3:22–27)

### King James Translation

14 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. 15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

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.

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.

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

### New Rendition

14 And he was casting out a demon, and it was mute. And it came to pass, as the demon was departing, the mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. 15 But some of them said, “He casts out the demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” 16 And others, testing him, kept asking from him a sign from heaven.

17 And he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a house divided against a house falls. 18 And Satan too, if he is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I am casting out the demons by Beelzebub. 19 And if I cast out the demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. 20 But if by the finger of God I am casting out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

21 “When the strong man, fully armed, guards his homestead, his possessions are undisturbed. 22 But when a man stronger than he comes against him and overpowers him, he takes his armor in which he trusted and distributes his spoils. 23 He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.

24 “And whenever an unclean spirit departs from a man, it goes through waterless regions looking for a resting place. And when it does not find it,



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.

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.

then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I went out.' 25 And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and when it has entered in it dwells there. And the final condition of that man becomes worse than the first."

27 And it came to pass while he was saying these things, a woman from the crowd raising her voice said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you nursed." 28 And he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

## Notes

**11:14 *he was casting out a devil:*** Luke provides no context for Jesus' actions, neither a place nor a time. As in other cases, he sets Jesus' act into a timeless framework that communicates divine constancy and regularity in Jesus' ministry, tying this incident only lightly to Jesus' journey and consciously continuing the story of Jesus' ongoing struggle with the devil and his minions (see 9:51; the Notes on 4:1, 5; the Analysis on 4:1–13). The word translated "devil" (Greek *daimion*) is more properly rendered "demon." The Joseph Smith Translation makes an interesting adjustment, clarifying that a man is the recipient of Jesus' aid: "he was casting a devil out of a man" (JST 11:15).

***it was dumb:*** The term for "dumb" can also refer to deafness (Greek *kōphos*);<sup>26</sup> the context here points to the inability to speak. Of course, this ailment usually arises from a natural condition, but here it is engendered by an outside force. Unlike this case, Zacharias's inability to speak is brought about by divine influence (see 1:20), but the result is the same.

***when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake:*** A notable and real pattern appears in this report. It is that the devil controls or binds the tongue of the possessed man, causing him effectively to be dumb. Only after exorcism can he speak for himself.

***the people wondered:*** The verb (Greek *thaumazō*) in Luke consistently points to human wonder, even grudgingly given, in the presence of divine

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26. BAGD, 463.

occurrences (see 1:21, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 20:26; 24:12, 41). Only rarely does it link to normal surprise or admiration (see 7:9; 11:38).<sup>27</sup>

**11:15 devils:** The term in Greek here and in following verses is “the demons,” with the definite article. Jesus thus associates these creatures together; they are real and not a creation of folk tales.<sup>28</sup>

**Beelzebub:** The name is a corruption of a Semitic title *Baalzebul* that means “Baal the Prince” or “Baal of the Exalted Abode.” Most early manuscripts read *Beelzebul*. The name “Beelzebub” means “Lord of flies.”<sup>29</sup>

**the chief of the devils:** The expression can be rendered “the ruler of the demons” and clearly points to Satan whom Jesus features in 11:18.<sup>30</sup> That people will accuse Jesus of operating under the power of the devil is prophesied more than 150 years before this scene (see Mosiah 3:9).

**11:16 tempting him:** The verb (Greek *peirazō*) can mean “to try, to make trial of,” as in other passages (see 4:2; 20:23; Acts 5:9; 15:10; see the Note on 4:2), or even “to attempt” (see Acts 16:7).<sup>31</sup>

**a sign from heaven:** Generally, the term for “sign” (Greek *sēmeion*) has to do with miracles or spectacular events (see 2:34; 23:8; Acts 2:22, 43; etc.), though not always (see 2:12; 11:29–30).<sup>32</sup> In this passage, Jesus’ opponents seemingly seek a celestial occurrence that will prove his divine calling to them, evidently disbelieving that he can perform such an act. This kind of happening harks back to Old Testament accounts of heaven-sent rain that accompanies the flood in Noah’s day, the plague of hail and the opening of the Red Sea in Moses’ era, and the fire from heaven in Elijah’s time (see Gen. 7:4, 11–12; Ex. 9:18–25; 14:13–29; 1 Kgs. 18:38–39). Such events, in Jesus’ prophetic words, will come in the end-time when heavenly signs will appear (see 21:11, 25; also Acts 2:19, quoting Joel 2:30; the Notes on 11:29; 21:7, 25). On a personal level, modern scripture holds that those who seek for signs are full of “lusts” (D&C 46:9).

**11:17 knowing their thoughts:** The verb translated “to know” (Greek *eidō*) carries in its first sense the meaning “to see,” which forms a very vivid image of Jesus’ beholding the thoughts of his questioners, that is, knowing them.<sup>33</sup> For Luke, Jesus’ ability to know the thoughts of others stands as

27. BAGD, 352–53; *TDNT*, 3:29–41.

28. Riddle, “Devils,” 1:379–82.

29. *TDNT*, 1:605–6; *TDOT*, 2:194; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:920.

30. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:921.

31. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1354; BAGD, 646.

32. BAGD, 755–56; *TDNT*, 7:231–36, 238–40.

33. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 483; BAGD, 558–59; *TDNT*, 6:844.

one of the proofs of his divinity, alongside his miraculous powers (see the Notes on 5:22; 6:8; 7:39; 11:17; 22:64).

**kingdom:** In a discussion about Beelzebub or Satan, the idea of a kingdom is not far away, for he fancies himself as the ruler of a counter kingdom (see 4:5–7; JS–H 1:20; D&C 10:56).<sup>34</sup>

**a house divided against a house falleth:** With Jesus’ reference to houses or, very probably, to households, he returns to a theme struck in the story of Martha and Mary (see 10:38–42; the Notes on 6:48–49; 18:20; the Analysis on 20:17–19). The expression can be understood either as members of a family who are divided against one another or as buildings falling into one another,<sup>35</sup> implying either bad foundations or ill-conceived construction methods. The Joseph Smith Translation leans toward the former interpretation: “a house divided cannot stand, but falleth” (JST 11:18).

**11:18 Satan:** This passage is one of the few that names Satan in Luke’s Gospel. From a review of the relevant passages, it becomes clear that (1) he seeks to associate himself with holiness (see the Note on 4:8; the Analysis on 4:1–13), (2) he exalts himself (see 10:18), (3) he works against people’s well-being (see 13:16; the Notes on 11:21–22), (4) he infiltrates the circles of Jesus’ loyalists (see the Notes on 22:3, 31, 46; also D&C 78:10), (5) he goes about “deceiving the nations” and inspiring “the shedding of blood” (D&C 52:14; 63:28), and (6) he possesses a counter kingdom (see JS–H 1:20; D&C 1:35; 10:56; 76:28).<sup>36</sup> His motivation comes from his defeat during premortal life after seeking to displace God and the Savior (see D&C 29:36–40; 76:25–28; 88:110–115).

**be divided:** The passive form of the verb (Greek *diamerizō*) appears in the aorist or simple past tense and indicates that, if Satan’s kingdom is divided even once, it will collapse.<sup>37</sup>

**how shall his kingdom stand?:** The question shows the breadth of Jesus’ prior point about “every kingdom” that lacks unity (see 11:17), disclosing that his remarks always hold a spiritual meaning and look beyond the entities of this world.

**his kingdom:** This term, repeated in Joseph Smith—History 1:20, is one of the most revealing about Satan.<sup>38</sup> Plainly, he presides over others who do

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34. Johnson, *Luke*, 74.

35. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:921; Johnson, *Luke*, 181.

36. For more information, see Riddle, “Devils,” 1:379–81.

37. BAGD, 185; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §318.

38. *TPJS*, 365.

his bidding in a kingdom-like setting (see D&C 1:35, “his [the devil’s] own dominion”; D&C 10:56, “they . . . build up the kingdom of the devil”; 86:3, “Satan, sitteth to reign”; D&C 127:11, “the prince of this world”), such as the demons who in various ways throw themselves into Jesus’ path and oblige him to expend energy in dealing with them (see, for example, 4:33–35, 41; 8:27–33; 9:38–42). Moreover, he adopts the trappings of the sacred, even in Jesus’ presence (see the Note on 4:8). In reality, Satan “was a liar from the beginning” and “cometh and taketh away light and truth” and “goeth forth deceiving the nations” (D&C 93:25, 93; 52:14; see 2 Ne. 28:19–22; the Notes on 22:3, 31, 46, 53; the Analysis on 22:31–34).

**11:19 *by whom do your sons cast them out?*** Jesus’ question forms an acknowledgment that, in addition to himself, others practice exorcism. Although Jesus does not indicate here that these “sons” are among his followers, Luke has earlier drawn our attention to authorized representatives who stand outside the Twelve and Seventy (see the Notes on 9:49–50 and the following Analysis). In this connection, in an important addition to Matthew’s rehearsal of this scene, the Joseph Smith Translation notes that these “sons” “also cast out devils by the Spirit of God, for unto them is given power over devils” (JST Matt. 12:23).<sup>39</sup> In the case of the Jewish exorcists noted in Acts 19:13, both the exorcists and those from whom the devils are driven believe that they succeed with divine help.

***therefore shall they be your judges:*** Exactly how the “sons” of Jesus’ detractors will serve as judges, he does not specify. But sense on the edge of his remark that such individuals stand within a circle of lofty personal spirituality that allows them to exercise control over demons (the Greek term translated “devils” in this verse is *daimonia*).

**11:20 *But if I . . . cast out devils:*** Here, Jesus sounds a warning to those who doubt him and his work. Though his answer is moderated, it still breathes the bracing air of his strong condemnation of the Galileans who earlier reject him (see 10:13–15).

***the finger of God:*** The phrase appears first in Exodus 8:19 in the mouths of the magicians in Pharaoh’s court. In this light, Jesus may be saying that he does not work miracles by charms and incantations. Other passages bring additional illumination. The psalmist calls the heavens “the work of [God’s] fingers,” a clear pointer to God’s creative acts (Ps. 8:3). Further, Moses receives from God the “tables of stone, written with the finger of

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39. McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:269.

God,” a direct reference to the Mosaic law (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 9:10).<sup>40</sup> Hence, Jesus’ words allude to both the creation and the giving of the law, and affirm that his actions are congruent with, and form extensions of, those divine actions. Not incidentally, Jesus’ power over devils forms the subject of prophecy more than a century before his birth and ministry: “he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men” (Mosiah 3:6).

***the kingdom of God is come upon you:*** The verb (Greek *phthanō*) appears in the aorist tense, the simple past, and means “to come before, to precede.” It can also mean simply “to arrive.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, the verb signals that the kingdom of God, an external entity, arrives with Jesus’ preaching and activity, agreeing with the reading in the Joseph Smith Translation, “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (JST 11:21). Elsewhere, Jesus characterizes the kingdom as somehow internalized, resting “within you” (17:21; see the Note on 6:20).

**11:21 a strong man:** The expression is properly *the strong man*. In this light, and in a metaphorical sense, this strong man has to be Satan (see the Note on 11:18).<sup>42</sup> According to Jesus’ words, up to this point Satan’s strength, his power, is undisturbed.

***his palace:*** The translation “palace” for the Greek term (*aulē*) seems appropriate.<sup>43</sup> The word simply refers initially to an open-air courtyard that may be a part of a person’s home, or may refer to the home itself, or may refer to a person’s sheepfold (see 22:55).<sup>44</sup> This owner possesses armor and other goods (see 11:22), hinting at an aristocratic home secured for a Roman official by a squad of soldiers.<sup>45</sup> Even so, the basic concept of home undergirds Jesus’ example.

***his goods:*** On the surface, the expression points to items in the house. But on a deeper level, they are those persons over whom the devil rules, including those in the spirit world (see Isa. 49:25; 53:12; 2 Ne. 2:29; the Note on 5:4).<sup>46</sup> Another view sees the “goods” of the devil as his minions who, though they enjoy a prior heavenly home (see Rev. 12:4; D&C 29:36;

40. Plummer, *Luke*, 302; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:922.

41. BAGD, 864; *TDNT*, 9:88–92.

42. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 268; *TDNT*, 3:400–401; Morris, *Luke*, 217; Green, *Luke*, 458.

43. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:922; Green, *Luke*, 457–58.

44. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 276; BAGD, 120–21.

45. Green, *Luke*, 457–58.

46. *TDNT*, 3:399–401; also 1:146–49.

Moses 4:6), are defeated and scattered by the stronger Messiah (see 2 Ne. 9:12, 16; the Note below).<sup>47</sup>

**11:22 a stronger than he:** The ancient world is full of unexpected violence, whether from armies or from brigands. However, Roman influence reaches across all of Palestine, bringing relief from the threat of invading forces and extreme forms of lawlessness. Hence, Jesus' example apparently sets out an uncommon experience of home invasion and therefore is all the more memorable. On the more important metaphorical level, of course, the expression points to Jesus himself as the "stronger [one]" (see the Note on 4:35) and characterizes in a fundamental way Jesus' understanding of himself.<sup>48</sup>

**overcome him:** The image is one of overcoming the owner or current occupant of the home rather than the structure itself, probably with the meaning of restoring the house to the proper owner. But in a spiritual sense, the victory over the "strong man," the devil, actually belongs to Christ (see John 12:31; Col. 1:13; 2:15; Heb. 2:14–15) who holds and dispenses the keys to the devil's dominion (see Rev. 9:1; 20:1).<sup>49</sup> In this connection, the later *Gospel of Nicodemus* paints a scene wherein the Savior subdues Hades—the dark lord who confines the spirits of the departed dead in darkness—and breaks down the gates of hell to free these spirits. This broad concept of deliverance lies behind the language of Isaiah 9:2 and 49:24–26 to which Jesus may be alluding. Jesus delivers the departed spirits by descending into that gloomy world (see Matt. 12:40; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:9; 1 Pet. 3:18–20; 4:6; Rev. 1:18; the Notes on 1:79; 5:4; 24:21; also Isa. 49:9; 1 Ne. 21:9; 2 Ne. 9:12, 19).<sup>50</sup> In doing so, he throws down "the gates of hell" (Matt. 16:18; also 2 Ne. 4:32; Alma 22:14; 3 Ne. 11:39–40; 18:13; D&C 10:69; 128:10–11; etc.) that are said to be made of iron and brass.<sup>51</sup> Art generally portrays Jesus first leading Adam and Eve to freedom, followed by other ancients.<sup>52</sup> The theme of Jesus' descent also appears in Psalm 16:10 that Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost, "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (Acts 2:27, 31; see Isa. 38:10; 2 Ne. 9:10, 12–13, 19, 26; the Notes on 4:18; 6:49; 16:27).

47. *TDNT*, 3:213, 301–2, 713, n. 460.

48. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 268; *TDNT*, 3:399–401; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:922–23; Morris, *Luke*, 217.

49. *TDNT*, 3:744–48; 4:944; Green, *Luke*, 458.

50. *TDNT*, 2:424; 6:577–78; "We'll Sing All Hail to Jesus' Name," verse 3.

51. *TDNT*, 6:924–28; also 3:744–47; Hippolytus, *Commentary on Luke Chapter 23*, in *ANF*, 5:194; *Gospel of Nicodemus* 21, in *NTA*, 1:473–74.

52. *NTA*, 1:470–81; Brown, Holzapfel, and Pheysey, *Beholding Salvation*, 90–93.

**all his armour:** The term (Greek *panoplia*) refers to the full armor of an infantryman who forms the backbone of the Roman army.<sup>53</sup> On a symbolic level, the armor equips the believer for the struggle against the devil's minions, as the word *panoplia* shows in Paul's own discussion of the "whole armor" of God (see Eph. 6:11, 13).<sup>54</sup>

**his spoils:** At first glance, it is not clear whether the spoils (Greek *skylon*) are those the strong man takes from others and are now to be returned to their rightful owners, or are the goods belonging to the strong man that, after he is vanquished, are to be distributed to the victor and his allies. The preferred sense of the passage points to goods captured by the strong man, that is, the souls captured by the devil.<sup>55</sup> In either view, the strong man, now overcome, loses control over what is in his possession—the Joseph Smith Translation calls them "his goods" (JST 11:23). On a spiritual level, the conquered Satan has to yield up his power as well as those persons he has captured, whether in mortality or among the departed dead (see Col. 1:13; 2:15; Heb. 2:14–15; 2 Ne. 9:12, 19, 26; D&C 21:6; 138:20–22, 36–37, 57–59),<sup>56</sup> thus strengthening the image of his sudden fall (see 10:18).

**11:23 He that is not with me:** Jesus' reference to himself in this brief summary lends weight to the metaphorical interpretation that the "strong man" is Satan and the "stronger" is the Savior who overpowers the strong one. Further, Jesus' point ties back to his mention of others who practice exorcism (see 11:19). Certainly, the principle here is to be added to his earlier declaration about his authorized disciples, "he that is not against us is for us," embracing a warm view of allies because of the plural "us" (9:50). Because Jesus stands as the focus of the saying—"not with me" and "against me"—his words have rather to do with a disciple's understanding of his or her relationship to the Savior (see the Note on 9:50).

**scattereth:** The image may be one of a farmer scattering seed; but the more natural picture is of one who scatters the flock, perhaps from a sheepfold (Greek *skorpizō*; see John 10:12; the Note on 11:21). When people are scattered, it is usually God who acts (see 2 Sam. 22:15; Ezek. 34:2–16; Zech. 13:7).<sup>57</sup> In this light, one who scatters takes up a role controlled by God

53. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1298; BAGD, 612; TDNT, 5:301.

54. TDNT, 5:301–2.

55. BAGD, 765; J. Reiling, and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* (Lieden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 441.

56. TDNT, 3:399–401; 5:301–2; Marshall, *Luke*, 478, stands against this broad interpretation.

57. TDNT, 7:418–21.

and the question becomes whether that person acts under God’s direction. According to Jesus, the answer is no.

**11:24 *unclean spirit*:** The appearance of the term translated “unclean” (Greek *akathartos*) seems puzzling when applied to a spirit, for it has to do with physical, ritual, and moral uncleanness.<sup>58</sup> Here, “unclean spirit” may simply point to a demon (see 8:27, 29; 9:42) and imply that casting out such a creature is not a healing but a cleansing (see the Notes on 4:33 and 6:18).

***the unclean spirit is gone out of a man*:** In the context of Jesus’ prior words, this spirit does not simply wander away from its “house,” though the language of the story invites this view,<sup>59</sup> but is forced out by divine power, thus cleansing the man.

***he walketh*:** The Joseph Smith Translation consistently refers to evil spirits and their ilk by the pronoun “it” rather than “he” (see JST 11:25–26; an exception is “himself” in JST 11:27).

***dry places*:** The expression may seem odd until we realize that the wilderness, or a place that becomes a wilderness, is where wild, evil, and unwanted creatures dwell (see Lev. 16:10; Isa. 13:20–21; 34:13–14; Rev. 18:2), including Satan himself (see 4:1–2).<sup>60</sup>

***my house*:** Besides the implied exorcism in this story, this term ties the saying to the broader context of homes and households (see the Notes on 6:48–49; 18:20). Perhaps ironically, the unclean spirit views as his home the man from whom he is driven, rather than the wilderness, though his kind is banished to such regions, as implied in “dust shalt thou eat” (Gen. 3:14; Moses 4:20).

**11:25 *swept and garnished*:** The place, the soul of the man, is prepared as it were for guests.<sup>61</sup> The basic sense of the verb translated “garnished” (Greek *kosmeō*) is “to put in order” though it can also mean “to adorn” (see 21:5).<sup>62</sup> The Joseph Smith Translation adds to Matthew’s report that “the good spirit [of the house] leaveth him unto himself” (JST Matt. 12:38), evidently meaning that the house is left open to the unclean spirit.

**11:26 *seven other spirits*:** Jesus’ notice recalls the “seven devils” that go out of his friend, Mary Magdalene, a clear pointer to multiple infestations (see the Notes on 8:2 and 8:30).

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58. BAGD, 28; *TDNT*, 3:427–29.

59. Plummer, *Luke*, 304.

60. Marshall, *Luke*, 479; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:925.

61. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:925.

62. BAGD, 445–46.



***more wicked than himself:*** We sense that the evil spirit is making a future exorcism more difficult to accomplish, for, it seems, the presence of other spirits will buttress their combined ability to resist.<sup>63</sup>

***enter in, and dwell:*** The spirits make the man's soul their permanent abode (see Alma 40:13). They do not intend to depart.<sup>64</sup>

***the last state of that man is worse:*** Here comes Jesus' punch line. For a person who is freed of evil influences, but does not replace them with good routines and habits, life will continue to be aggravated with difficulties: "unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return" (D&C 82:7).

**11:27 *a certain woman of the company:*** As the King James translation stands, it appears that this unidentified woman is one of those traveling with him (see 8:2–3). But the term rendered "company" (Greek *ochlos*) refers to the crowd of people surrounding him (see 11:14).<sup>65</sup> Whether she is among the skeptics remains unknown (see 11:15–16). But she is obviously impressed with what Jesus both does and says.

***Blessed is the womb that bare thee:*** The woman's comment brings us inside Jesus' own family by highlighting his mother and her relationship to him. The woman is not only singing the praises of Jesus, the extraordinary child, but also of Mary who raises him.<sup>66</sup> In a literary sense, this beatitude does not point to the present or future, as many beatitudes do, but clearly looks backward to the moment of Jesus' birth. Outside of the infancy narratives of chapters 1 and 2, and the prior mention of Jesus' mother and his brothers in a Galilee setting (see 8:19–21), Mary does not emerge into plain view in Luke's Gospel, though she plays a prominent part in the meeting to choose the successor to Judas Iscariot (see Acts 1:14).

**11:28 *blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it:*** For the second time in Jesus' ministry, when events come to focus on his mother, he points to hearing and doing: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (8:21). In this light, we can conclude that, in Jesus' mind, Mary stands as the grand exemplar of hearing "the word of God" and keeping it (see the Notes on 6:27; 8:8; especially 8:21). The universal character of Jesus' saying receives emphasis in the Joseph Smith Translation that adds the word *all*: "blessed are all they who hear the word of God, and keep it" (JST 11:29).

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63. Marshall, *Luke*, 480; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:925.

64. Plummer, *Luke*, 305.

65. BAGD, 605–6.

66. *TDNT*, 4:369.

## Analysis

The whole thrust of these verses pushes forward the Savior’s power over the unseen world of demons, including the devil’s dominance over captive spirits.<sup>67</sup> But that aspect is not the only bright, visible thread. Intriguingly tied and bound with this demon-defeating power is the dimension of home and households. Somehow, lying amidst the banter of Jesus with his opponents and rising within his sayings to them, home and family stand in close proximity to the world of evil, so close that this world both forms an inimical and crippling intrusion into the home and, in Jesus’ words, must be overcome and separated from it. In effect, without a conquering effort, evil can make its permanent camp within a person’s home (see Alma 40:13). Moreover, the stories and sayings packed into these verses illumine Jesus’ interest in home and family, underscoring their proper place as refuges from evil (see the Notes on 6:48–49; 14:26; 18:20; the Analysis on 6:20–49 and 20:17–19).

In the conflict, Jesus pushes back the frontiers of the devil’s kingdom (see the introduction to chapter 4). Even when Jesus’ teaching is seen through a metaphorical lens, it becomes clear that he is tossing out the intruder, “the strong man,”<sup>68</sup> who invades his house, “his kingdom,” and takes captives who now need deliverance.<sup>69</sup> If we understand that Jesus often speaks on both a terrestrial and celestial level at the same time, we find here a strong allusion to his redeeming work among the departed spirits (see the Notes on 4:18; 5:4; 11:21, 22; D&C 138:11–24). Satan is the one who earlier seeks to represent himself as the holy one who dwells on high, in a holy place, effectively in a holy house (see the Note on 4:5). Thus the house becomes the focus, the battleground as it were, between the forces of good and evil. The story of the wandering spirit illustrates the point most graphically: it pines for its lost home and, when opportunity arises, pushes its way back inside, with the help of allies, thus disrupting its sacred and tranquil character (see 11:24–26).

The interests in the home and family, as Luke presents them, arise initially in the story of the sisters Martha and Mary who host Jesus in Martha’s house (see 10:38–42). There, a division arises, an aspect that persists into Jesus’ discussion about casting out demons. Hence, these stories are to be seen as a whole, fitting tightly together and illustrating Jesus’ concern for a harmony in the home that rests on proper spiritual principles, as Jesus’

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67. *TDNT*, 3:213, 301–2, 713, n. 460.

68. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 268.

69. *TDNT*, 3:399–401.

words about Mary demonstrate: “one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part” (10:42). Further, Jesus’ concept of a strong home environment includes the tangible, concrete influence of the “stronger” person, that is, the Savior himself, within one’s “palace” (see 11:21–22). And a person’s commitment to bring Jesus’ influence into the home cannot be half-baked, for the stakes are high: “He that is not with me is against me” (11:23). Additionally, a home comfortably “swept and garnished” fails as a refuge from harmful influences if nothing is put in place to resist wickedness, or to take the place of earlier enticing evil (see 11:24–26). But this is not all. One’s birth into a good home, where parents exert an uplifting influence, does not assure a good outcome by itself. More is required. As Jesus reminds his hearers, “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (11:28). This saying, and another like it (see 8:21), both tied to Jesus’ mother, point to her as the first, enduring example in his life of one who keeps a proper home adorned with values and obedience to God.

In framing his teachings on home and evil influences—in Jesus’ society, possession by demons is a firm proof of evil’s presence—he brings forward vivid, even extreme language, evidently to make his points more memorable: a kingdom in revolt and a house collapsing against another structure (see 11:17); sons of his hearers as the hearers’ judges (see 11:19); God’s finger and, with it, the palpable presence of his kingdom (see 11:20); the conquest of a palace and the freeing of captives (see 11:22); and a wandering, “unclean spirit” who resists banishment (see 11:24–26). Both the original hearers and later readers come away with an enhanced memory of Jesus’ teachings and the incidents that spawn them.

Besides the colorful character of these verses, here a person learns more about the world of Satan and his minions than in any other New Testament passage. First, Satan is real and possesses a kingdom. Within that kingdom, he is “the chief of the devils” who are his subjects. Second, those demons can be controlled by divine means. For both Jesus and others are known exorcists who cast out such creatures from their human hosts. Third, Satan highly values exercising control over homes and households, and can be best resisted and wrestled down with the aid of the “stronger” one, that is, the Savior himself. Fourth, he and his minions do not give up easily, as the story of the “unclean spirit” and his seven allies proves. Their resourceful persistence reminds a reader of Moses’ four attempts to drive off a determined Satan before he finally departs (see Moses 1:16, 18, 20, 21), and of the Lord’s warning words in two other places: “that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth” (D&C 93:39) and “the adversary spreadeth his dominions” (D&C 82:5).

Significantly, Jesus’ summarizing words throughout these verses illuminate much of what he is trying to highlight. One of his framing concepts enfolds the kingdom of God: if he is truly casting out demons “with the finger of God,” that is, with God’s authority and power, then “the kingdom of God is come upon you” (11:20). No one need wait; Jesus’ power over demons demonstrates that it has arrived. Therefore—and here is the second summarizing point—whether or not a person’s actions are in harmony with Jesus’ actions becomes a major issue: “He that is not with me is against me.” There is more. Jesus’ actions are those of gathering. A disciple is to follow Jesus’ example and not act contrarily: “he that gathereth not with me scattereth” (11:23). Such actions, turned in a positive direction—that is, standing with Jesus as a disciple and gathering with him—will be a natural outcome of the third summarizing statement, framed in the form of a beatitude: “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (11:28). The risk for many of his hearers in this setting, particularly those who question his motives when he casts out devils, is that they will not perceive that “the kingdom of God is come,” that they are thus scattering rather than gathering, and that they unwittingly are unable to “hear the word of God, and keep it.”

With the Beelzebub controversy, Luke’s narrative briefly reconnects with materials from Mark’s Gospel. But the story’s setting and the details rehearsed in Mark 3:22–27 differ rather strikingly from those of Luke 11:15–22, raising the question again whether Luke is following Mark. Certainly, Luke’s order is not the same, for he places the report later in Jesus’ ministry than does Mark. And enough details diverge between the two accounts to lead us to conclude that Luke likely acquires the story from a different source, not from Mark.

## **SIGNS OF THE TIMES (11:29–32)**

(Compare Matt. 12:38–42; Mark 8:11–12)

### **King James Translation**

29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but

### **New Rendition**

29 And while the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation. It looks for a sign, but a sign will not be given to it,

the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

except the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment against the men of this generation and will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here.”

## Notes

**11:29 when the people were gathered thick together:** The verb (Greek *epathroizomai*) is rare and carries the meaning “to assemble besides,” that is, to assemble either in extra gatherings or in larger numbers.<sup>70</sup> The latter sense appears here, portraying growing throngs that meet Jesus during this part of his ministry. Matthew’s setting for what follows begins with “certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees” asking for a sign (see Matt. 12:38). Once again, Luke does not present a time or a place for the action (see the Note on 11:1).

**This is an evil generation:** Jesus’ severe judgment on his contemporary world mirrors his words in 11:13: “ye . . . being evil” (see the Note on 11:13). Thus, he teaches that humans cannot be good in an ultimate, celestial sense, and need someone to rescue them.

**they seek a sign:** Before this notation, we do not encounter people seeking a sign from Jesus for the sign’s sake except shortly before this moment, perhaps as a prelude (see 11:16). We sense that a pattern is developing during his ministry that Luke does not bring fully into the open until now, a pattern of expecting to see a miracle (see the hint in 4:23). The heightened interest in signs, as it appears from other sources, indicates not merely a lack of faith but, in certain instances, the gnarly presence of personal wickedness (see Matt. 12:39; 16:4; 1 Cor. 1:22; Alma 30:43; 32:17).<sup>71</sup>

70. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 603; BAGD, 281.

71. *TPJS*, 278.

***the sign of Jonas the prophet:*** In turning attention to the prophet Jonah, Jesus seeks to underscore the prophet’s connection to the gentile people of Nineveh who repent at his preaching and thereby escape a horrible doom (see Jonah 3:1–10). Jesus’ concern for Gentiles appears beforehand, including in his short speech in the Nazareth synagogue (see 4:24–27), his healing of the Gergesene demoniac (see 8:26–39), and his commissioning of the Seventy (see 10:1–8). In Matthew’s account, Jesus features Jonah when bringing focus on his future time in the tomb, the only occasion when he says “three days and three nights” in the Gospel records (Matt. 12:40).<sup>72</sup> Curiously, Luke’s rehearsal omits any direct notice of the resurrection, except the hint of the queen rising for the judgment (see 11:31), and rests squarely on Jonah as a catalyst for repentance, an act which Jesus’ audience is resisting. The differences raise the question whether Matthew and Luke are following the same source when recounting Jesus’ saying.

**11:30 *Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites:*** Here lies the nub of Jesus’ words about the prophet. It has nothing to do with the resurrection, as in Matthew 12:39–40, but rather repentance (see the Note on 11:29).

***so shall also the Son of man be:*** Perhaps more than any other saying, Jesus’ summary of his ministry—as one of enticing people to repent—anchors itself at the heart of his preaching. He brings forward the story of Jonah among the people of Nineveh, a gentile people, to aid him in making this penetrating point (see also Matt. 12:41).

**11:31 *The queen of the south:*** Jesus draws up to our view the Queen of Sheba (see 1 Kgs. 10:1–10; 2 Chr. 9:1–12). The best scholarship points to south Arabia as the locale for her kingdom, the Sabaean Empire whose capital is Marib, although Josephus ties her kingdom to Ethiopia.<sup>73</sup>

***shall rise up in the judgment:*** Two matters become visible. First, Jesus paints a courtroom scene wherein witnesses or accusers stand up, a meaning that the verb carries (Greek *egeirō*).<sup>74</sup> Second, in Jesus’ mind, the

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72. David B. Cummings, “Three Days and Three Nights: Reassessing Jesus’ Entombment,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 56–63. David Randall Scott, “The Book of Jonah: Foreshadowings of Jesus as the Christ,” *BYU Studies* 53, no. 3 (2014): 161–80, argues that key elements in Jonah’s book anticipate Jesus’ ministry, including his “crucifixion, spirit world ministry, and resurrection.”

73. Werner Daum, ed., *Yemen: 3000 Years of Art and Civilisation in Arabia Felix* (Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 1987), 49, 76; Gus W. Van Beek, “Sheba,” in Meyers, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, 5:19; Josephus, *A.J.* 2.10.2 (§249); Job 6:19 associates the northwest Arabian site of Tema with Sheba.

74. Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3d ed. (rpt. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 134; *TDNT*, 3:408, n. 15; cited in Marshall, *Luke*, 486.

queen's vigorous effort to meet and learn from King Solomon counts positively for her in the final judgment. On this view, God notices all human efforts to improve.

***she came from the utmost parts of the earth:*** Her journey, if begun at Marib in Yemen, covers about 1,400 miles, one way.

***a greater than Solomon is here:*** This comparison is the first of two whereby Jesus elevates himself above authorities, here, a king and, later, a prophet (see 11:32). Among priests, the third group of authorities in ancient Israelite society, Zacharias stands as a witness for God's marvelous acts (see 1:68–79). Except for the parable of the Good Samaritan (see 10:31), Jesus does not diminish priests but holds them up in their proper lofty place (see 5:14; 17:14). Jesus' act of tying himself to Solomon links him to the former kings of Israel and effectively serves him up as their culmination: "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (see 1:32).<sup>75</sup>

***11:32 shall rise up:*** In its active sense, the verb (Greek *anistēmi*) regularly means to raise the dead to life, hinting here at the resurrection (see 18:33; 24:7, 46).<sup>76</sup> In this context, it also points to producing a witness or accuser, here in a courtroom scene (cf. Acts 3:22; 7:37).<sup>77</sup>

***they repented:*** By citing the story of Jonah again, Jesus leads his hearers back to the fact that the people of Nineveh repent but members of his audience are apparently not making any effort to do so.

***a greater than Jonas is here:*** Besides linking himself to Israel's former kings (see 11:31), Jesus binds his ministry to the prophets, thus placing himself as their climax.<sup>78</sup> Strategically, he ties himself to the prophet who is called to Gentiles.

## Analysis

When the Savior addresses the timeless topic of repentance, he fills his sayings with stories that feature Gentiles, thus underscoring the universal need to repent. No one escapes. The actions of the "queen of the south," in traveling far to meet Solomon (11:31), illustrate the essential element of resolute resolve in the repentance process—literally nothing should deter a person from repenting before God. As a further illustration, the ready response of the citizens of Nineveh shimmers in the desert heat as

75. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:934.

76. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 144–45; BAGD, 69; *TDNT*, 1:368–71.

77. Black, *Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 134; *TDNT*, 3:408, n. 15.

78. Marshall, *Luke*, 487.

a beckoning brook, for “the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.” Their response to Jonah’s warning is so firm and decisive that “God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” (Jonah 3:5, 10).

But the need for repentance is more than universal. It stands forth as the key ingredient in Jesus’ ministry, for he is its visible “sign” (11:30). His palpable presence, as Jonah walking among the Ninevites, presses hearers to come to repentance; his royal presence, as that of the queen in King Solomon’s court, reminds his audience that none are exempt from repenting, “from the greatest of them even to the least” (Jonah 3:5). And by calling up Solomon and Jonah, Jesus underlines in bright hues his kingly and prophetic authority to demand repentance.

Moreover, he features Gentiles as recipients of God’s mercies, a tactic that he follows from the day that he enters the Nazareth synagogue (see 4:24–27). They are as deserving as Israelites of God’s blessings. And to anchor his point in his own actions, Jesus visits the gentile demoniac, heals him, and sends the Seventy among foreigners (see 8:26–39; 10:1–20). Such accounts, of course, prepare us for the coming mission to the Gentiles, which Luke will narrate in the book of Acts. But these reports represent more. They bring fulfillment to Simeon’s words that the infant Jesus will bring the salvation which God has “prepared before the face of all the people” and will stand as a “light to lighten the Gentiles” (2:31–32). He is that light, he is the one prepared.

One major theme of these verses concerns judgment which shapes a waxing warning to Jesus’ hearers. For this theme arises again in the final scenes of this chapter wherein he renders judgment against some Pharisees and lawyers who will join him as guests at a dinner (see 11:37–54). Much in these accounts ties back to Jesus’ hopeful—or ominous—statement, “the kingdom of God is come upon you” (11:20). Earlier, Jesus stands forth as judge when healing the man with the withered hand (see 6:6–10), and his words about judgment here illumine his authority to speak about it. Notably, the response both among the Pharisees and lawyers, and at the Galilean synagogue where he meets the man, is almost identical. It is one of fury (see 6:11; 11:53–54).

The expressions “a greater than Solomon is here” and “a greater than Jonas is here” connect back to a theme grounded amidst his words about “a strong man” and “a stronger than he” (11:31–32, 21–22). The language of



comparison, which Jesus adopts through these sayings, thrusts him forward as the stronger man, the greater king, the clearer prophetic voice. We sense no outsized ego in his language. He is simply framing in clear terms what he is.

Matthew's version of these sayings differs markedly, with the initial emphasis resting on Jesus' resurrection rather than on repentance, and with a different order in presenting the queen and the Ninevites (see Matt. 12:38–42). Although the accounts of Luke and Matthew may go back to a common source, as most argue,<sup>79</sup> the differences are so stark that some sort of independence must remain a possibility.

## LIGHT AND DARKNESS (11:33–36)

(Compare Matt. 5:15; 6:22–23; Mark 4:21)

### King James Translation

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

### New Rendition

33 “No one lights a lamp and puts it in a cellar [nor under a vessel] but on a lamp stand, so that those who enter may see the light. 34 The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is healthy, your wholebody is also illumined. But when it is sick, your body is dark. 35 Therefore see to it that the light in you is not darkness. 36 Hence, if your whole body is full of light, without any dark part, it will be completely full of light as when a lamp illuminates you with its light.”

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79. Bultmann, *History*, 112–13; Marshall, *Luke*, 482–83; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:930–31.

## Notes

**11:33 *No man*:** As at 8:16, the masculine gender of the Greek term (*oudeis*) applies to both men and women.<sup>80</sup> Lighting a lamp (Greek *lychnos*) is not an act that men alone perform.

***candle*:** The word (Greek *lychnos*) refers to a lamp, not a candle (see 8:16).<sup>81</sup> These lamps are made of clay with a hole in the top for adding oil and a narrow spout into which a flax wick is inserted for burning.<sup>82</sup> In day time, a clay lamp illuminates a room with a small, pale light, but in the dark it is strikingly bright (see the Notes on 8:16; 24:39).

***in a secret place*:** Some suggest that not Jesus but early church members may be pointing to cellars in nice Hellenistic homes. But attributing this part of Jesus' saying to early church members who are preaching among Gentiles seems ill-founded.<sup>83</sup>

***under a bushel*:** This phrase, which also appears in Matt. 5:15 and Mark 4:21 in Jesus' discussions about lamps and light, is textually suspect in Luke because it does not appear in the earliest manuscripts,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ . A later scribe may have inserted the phrase to harmonize the accounts. The term translated "bushel" (Greek *modios*) is a grain measure of approximately 8.75 liters.<sup>84</sup> It may have been customary to place the vessel over a lamp to extinguish it and to keep the unpleasant fumes from spreading throughout small homes.<sup>85</sup>

***a candlestick*:** Although the term (Greek *lychnia*) generally points to the lamp stand in the temple (see LXX 2 Chr. 4:7, 20; 13:11; Jer. 52:19),<sup>86</sup> it can also denote the lamp holder in an apartment or small dwelling place (see LXX 4 Kgs. 4:10; the Notes on 8:16; 24:39).<sup>87</sup>

***they which come in may see the light*:** The expression seems to point to the entry light that hangs inside the doors of homes.<sup>88</sup> Matthew preserves a version of Jesus' saying about the lamp that sheds its light throughout a

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80. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §139, a case of a "collective (generic) singular."

81. BAGD, 484.

82. *TDNT*, 4:324–27; Irene and Walter Jacob, "Flora," in *ABD*, 2:815.

83. Dodd, *Parables*, 106; Jeremias, *Parables*, 27, 66; *TDNT*, 3:975.

84. BAGD, 527.

85. Jeremias, *Parables*, 120.

86. The desert tabernacle features one lamp stand (see Ex. 25:31–32; 40:4; etc.) whereas Solomon commissions ten for his temple (see 1 Kgs. 7:49). The first post-exilic temple is again graced by one (see Zech. 4:2).

87. BAGD, 484; *TDNT*, 4:324.

88. Jeremias, *Parables*, 27, n. 9, 66, 120.

small home, probably perched in a lofty niche in the wall or on an elevated piece that juts out from the wall (see Matt. 5:15).

**11:34 *the light of the body is the eye:*** The term translated “light” here is the word for lamp (Greek *lychnos*). More than that, the eye is a two-way instrument. First, it forms the conduit for light entering a person’s body, both that which is visible and that which is spiritual (see D&C 88:11). Second, it radiates outward the light that resides in a person, likely the principal meaning here (see 1 Sam. 14:27, 29).<sup>89</sup>

***single:*** The meaning of the word (Greek *haplous*) can be “healthy” in a physical context, but “pure” in an ethical or spiritual sense.<sup>90</sup> In Matthew’s rendition, the Joseph Smith Translation expands the text to read “single to the glory of God,” focusing on the spiritual point of Jesus’ words (JST Matt. 6:22).

***thy whole body:*** The most obvious sense of this phrase connects to the physical body and only secondarily to the spiritual side of a person. Yet the two meanings probably stand equally yoked here. On this view, Jesus shows concern for both an individual’s physical and spiritual self.

***full of light:*** The adjective (Greek *phōteinos*), also translated hereafter as “full of light” (see 11:36), means “bright” or “illuminated,” and often appears contrasted with the term for “darkened” (see Gen. 1:4–5, 18; Moses 2:3–5, 18; Abr. 4:3–5, 17; D&C 14:9; 88:67; in D&C 103:9–10 the contrast is to savorless salt).<sup>91</sup> Matthew pictures the divine cloud that hovers above the three Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration as “bright,” the same term (Matt. 17:5).

***full of darkness:*** This term (Greek *skoteinos*), also an adjective, frequently stands opposite the term for “bright” or “lightened” and carries the meanings “darkened” or “obscure.” The sense is that no light is present.<sup>92</sup>

**11:35 *Take heed:*** This translation of the verb (Greek *skopeō*) conveys a warning to the modern reader. The more complete sense is “to consider critically,” actively discerning between the eternal and the transitory.<sup>93</sup>

***the light which is in thee:*** Jesus holds up the possibility that a person’s inner light can be extinguished, allowing debilitating darkness to take up residence.<sup>94</sup> Such a principle ties back to the story of the wandering demon who recaptures his place even after it has been “swept and garnished” (see 11:24–26).

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89. Green, *Luke*, 465–66.

90. *TDNT*, 1:386.

91. BAGD, 880; *TDNT*, 9:312, 343–45; *TLNT*, 3:470–91.

92. BAGD, 764; *TDNT*, 7:423–45

93. BAGD, 764; *TDNT*, 7:414–16.

94. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 243.

**11:36 *having no part dark*:** In reference to our inner self, we cannot hide sin inside. Otherwise, our inner light dims as does our capacity to discern spiritual influences.<sup>95</sup>

***bright shining*:** The term (Greek *astrapē*) is a noun in the dative case and means “by lightning” (see 10:18; 17:24), though here the expression means “by a beam of light.”<sup>96</sup>

***a candle*:** Expanding on this word for *lamp* (Greek *lychnos*), the Joseph Smith Translation reads “a candle lighteneth a room” (JST 11:37). By the addition of three words, the saying now emphasizes where a person is. These added words, and those that appear at the end of the verse, “in all the room,” point to a home rather than to another place. Hence, light within one’s home rises in importance to match the light that one carries within, illustrating that inviting divine light into one’s home bears significant, positive consequences.

***doth give thee light*:** The Joseph Smith Translation changes “thee” to “the” and adds a phrase at the end of this expression, “in all the room,” subtly shifting the emphasis from personal illumination to light in one’s home: “doth give the light in all the room” (JST 11:37). By the additions to this verse in the JST, the text of 11:36 ties back to the home setting of 11:33, unifying the whole rather than leaving verses 11:33–36 as consisting of two seemingly unrelated sayings.

## Analysis

The Savior’s interest in candlesticks and candles—properly *lamp stands* and *lamps*—first brings a reader within the temple, thus within sacred space. For the term translated “candlestick” (Greek *luchnia*) points foremost to the golden lamp stand within the sanctuary, with its seven lamps (see LXX Ex. 25:31; 40:4; 2 Chr. 4:7, 20; Jer. 52:19; etc.).<sup>97</sup> To be sure, on Jesus’ lips, verse 11:33 bears all the marks of a home.<sup>98</sup> And the presence of lamp stands in homes or apartments receives confirmation from the Old Testament (see LXX 4 Kgs. 4:10). But the connections to a sacred place are not to be missed, effectively linking temple and home together as places of holiness.

95. McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:240.

96. BAGD, 117; *TDNT*, 1:505.

97. Carol Meyers, “Lampstand,” in *ABD*, 4:141–43.

98. Both Dodd (*Parables*, 106, n. 32) and Jeremias (*Parables*, 27, n. 9; 66) hold that 11:33 points to Greco-Roman houses.

Lamps, of course, bear symbolic meaning throughout Jesus' teachings.<sup>99</sup> We think of the woman who lights a lamp to illumine the corners of her home as she searches for her lost coin (see 15:8); we consider Jesus' admonition to be ready: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights [lamps] burning" (12:35); we recall his words about the Baptist: "He was a burning and a shining light [lamp]" (John 5:35). All such sayings point to lamps as metaphors for radiant light.

In this connection, the lamp and the light may well refer to Jesus, now lit and visible (see D&C 14:9).<sup>100</sup> For, as we learn elsewhere, his light illumines and glows in all of creation: "the light of Christ . . . is in the sun . . . [and] giveth you light . . . [and] giveth life to all things" (D&C 88:7, 11, 13). Naturally, his audience will not know this characteristic, but he is trying to coax them into glimpsing even a little of the light that emanates from him. In the language of the psalmist, "thou wilt light my candle [lamp]: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness" (Ps. 18:28). More than this, Jesus' appeal to images of light and darkness embraces the contrasts in accepting or rejecting his message. If a person receives his message fully, then "thy whole body therefore [will] be full of light." If not, then "thy body also is full of darkness" (11:34).<sup>101</sup>

Verse 36 poses problems for interpreters who wrestle with trying to understand "the whole shall be full of light." For some, the light comes from those who are illumined by Jesus; for others, the light emanates from those who do not know Jesus but are upright in their lives; for still others, the light infuses and remains within those who accept Jesus and his message.<sup>102</sup> Notably, the Joseph Smith Translation adds eight words at the end of the verse and thereby offers a clarifying tie to the home: "the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle *lighteneth a room and* doth give the light *in all the room*" (JST 11:37; emphasis added). By adding these words, the JST astutely lifts emphasis from a person's inner light and sets it upon light that illumines a home. Remarkably, such a notion links back to Jesus' interest in the home that has been taken over by "a strong man" and then is freed by "a stronger," allusions to the devil and to himself (see the Notes on 11:21–22; the Analysis on 11:14–28). In the earlier passage, the home is shown to be an important battleground between forces of evil and

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99. *TDNT*, 4:326–27.

100. Jeremias, *Parables*, 120–21; Marshall, *Luke*, 487; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:939–40.

101. *TDNT*, 4:326; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:940; McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:240.

102. Marshall, *Luke*, 490.

good. The changes in this later verse continue the same sense—accepting Jesus’ light means that the entire home, including its inhabitants, “shall be full of light.” Otherwise, the risk looms that all within the home will be doused in darkness.

The question now arises, What is the connection between these sayings about light (see 11:33–36) and Jesus’ prior discussion on judgment (see 11:29–32)? First, on one level, it seems that whether a person is enlightened or darkened forms a judgment of sorts about the person’s character. Second, on another level, the person who prays (see 11:1–13) and maintains unity in the home (see 11:14–28) and honors Jesus (see 11:29–32) receives light, so that the “whole body also is full of light” (11:34). Not surprisingly, in the story that follows, that of Jesus in the home of the Pharisee, Jesus’ condemnations against certain actions forms strong judgments, tying to 11:29–32.

Again, the matter of the relationship of Luke’s account to that of Matthew pushes itself to the front. Matthew preserves sayings of Jesus on lamps and lights in two different spots, both within the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:15; 6:22–23). Perhaps importantly, Mark repeats a saying that stands close to Luke 11:33: “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?” (Mark 4:21). Although one might hold that these sayings originally come from one source and that each of the Gospel writers adopts and adapts them to suit his needs,<sup>103</sup> it is also possible to understand them as separate sayings that Jesus utters on different occasions.<sup>104</sup>

## CONFRONTING PHARISEES AND LAWYERS ABOUT THE LAW (11:37–54)

(Compare Matt. 23:1–7, 13–36; Mark 7:1–13; 12:38–39)

### King James Translation

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. 38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do

### New Rendition

37 And when he had finished speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him. And going in, he reclined at the table. 38 And the Pharisee was amazed when he saw that he did not first ritually wash himself before the meal. 39 And

103. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:938–39.

104. *TDNT*, 4:326.

ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? 41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. 42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. 46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: 50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 Fools! Did not he who made the outside, also make the inside? 41 But give what is inside as alms, and behold everything will be clean for you.

42 “But woe to you Pharisees, for you tithe mint and rue and every vegetable, but neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced these things without neglecting the others. 43 Woe to you Pharisees, for you love the seat of honor in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplace. 44 Woe to you, for you are like unmarked graves, and men walk over them without knowing it.”

45 And one the lawyers answering said to him, “Teacher, by saying these things you insult us too.” 46 And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also, for you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 Woe to you, for you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 So, you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build.

49 “Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute’ 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged to this generation— 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Indeed, I say to you, it will be charged to this generation. 52 Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you

52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: 54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

did not enter yourselves, and you prevented those who were entering.”

53 And when he left there, the scribes and Pharisees began to be very hostile and to challenge him about various things, 54 plotting to catch him in something he might say.

## Notes

**11:37 a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him:** The text of this sentence differs among manuscripts, but comes to the same meaning.<sup>105</sup> Luke again introduces a story without connecting it to time or place, draping the whole in a timeless fabric. To this point, Jesus meets Pharisees only during his Galilean ministry, mostly in uncomfortable situations (see 5:21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7; 7:30, 39). Once before, the interaction begins cordially when Jesus is a guest in a Pharisee’s home, but becomes rather testy (see 7:36, 39–47).

**to dine:** The Greek verb (*aristaō*) usually points to the first meal of the day (see 14:12; John 21:12, 15), although it can refer to the later, main meal which takes place at midday (see the Note on 11:38).<sup>106</sup>

**sat down:** The verb (Greek *anapiptō*) means to recline at a meal on pillows, typically lying on the left side, eating with the right hand, and extending the feet outward. The low-lying table will be within easy reach (see the Notes on 14:10; 17:7; 22:14).<sup>107</sup>

**11:38 not first washed:** According to Mark, the Pharisees hold to the custom of washing their hands before meals (see Mark 7:2–5), an extension and change of the custom of washing feet known from antiquity (see Gen. 18:4; Judg. 19:21).<sup>108</sup> But the verb signifies “to immerse” (Greek *baptizō*), perhaps pointing to bathing in a mikvah or ritual washing pool.<sup>109</sup> Significantly,

105. Marshall, *Luke*, 493; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:946.

106. Josephus, *Life* 54 (§279); BAGD, 106; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (rpt., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1962), 205–7; Marshall, *Luke*, 493–94.

107. BAGD, 59; also *TDNT*, 3:654–56.

108. Josephus (*B.J.* 2.8.5 [§§129–30]) notes this custom among Essenes; also Neusner, *Glory of God Is Intelligence*, 22–28, 34, 39–40.

109. BAGD, 131–32; *TDNT*, 1:535–36.



even in the home of a Pharisee where, presumably, Jesus knows about the practice of washing hands before a meal, he does not wash, choosing not to follow a changed custom and demonstrating his independence from such practices, even though, for social reasons, guests may respectfully follow them when in Pharisaic homes.

**he marvelled:** The sense of the verb here (Greek *thaumazō*) is that the host is astonished at Jesus' attitude toward custom.<sup>110</sup> The term regularly describes also the reaction of people to Jesus' miraculous powers (see 8:25; 9:43; 11:14).

**dinner:** The meal is very possibly breakfast (Greek *ariston*), though the later meal cannot be ruled out (see the Note on 11:37).<sup>111</sup>

**11:39 the Lord:** In keeping with his lofty estimate of Jesus' status, Luke again calls him *Lord*, a title reserved for Jehovah in the Old Testament (see the Notes on 2:11; 5:8; 10:1). So far, Luke applies this title when the Savior shows his deep compassion and astonishing power over death (see 7:13), when he speaks of hypocrisy (see 7:31), and when he commissions the Seventy (see 10:1). This title, of course, earlier finds utterance on the lips of others (see 5:12; 7:6; 9:54, 57, 59, 61; 10:17, 40; 11:1).

**the outside of the cup and the platter:** At its heart, the issue concerns public style versus inner character, much as his words about almsgiving, prayer and fasting in the Sermon on the Mount do (see Matt. 6:1–6, 16–18).<sup>112</sup>

**inward part:** The allusion back to “the whole body” being “full of light” or “full of darkness” (11:34) seems purposeful here, linking Jesus' prior teaching with this scene.

**ravening:** The word (Greek *harpagē*) means plunder or what has been stolen by force, effectively accusing these people not only of illegal activities but of high handedness in carrying them out (see the Note on 20:47).<sup>113</sup>

**11:40 fools:** Jesus turns a favorite Pharisee term against them (Greek *aphrōn*), stirring them to anger because they fancy themselves as teachers “of the foolish” (Rom. 2:20).<sup>114</sup>

**he that made:** The obvious reference points to God who is the maker of all (see the same verb in Acts 4:24; 7:50; 14:15—Greek *poieō*).<sup>115</sup> Jesus thus

110. BAGD, 352–53; *TDNT*, 3:36–40.

111. BAGD, 106; Marshall, *Luke*, 493–94.

112. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon*, 78–79, 81–82; Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 141–43.

113. BAGD, 108; *TDNT* 1:472–73.

114. Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1:214; *TDNT*, 9:230–31.

115. BAGD, 687–89.

elevates the conversation from a concern about tradition, which is thought to possess divine dimensions in the minds of the Pharisaic guests, to a discussion about ultimate values. We sense an allusion in Jesus' words to Jeremiah's experience with the potter, adding a dimension of judgment, just as God is to judge the inhabitants of Jerusalem (see Jer. 18:2–10; 19:11).

**that which is within:** Interpretations differ whether Jesus is drawing attention to what is inside a person or what is inside “the cup and the platter” (11:39).<sup>116</sup> Jesus may be alluding to both, speaking ambiguously on purpose to make a point about our dependency on God for personal growth and our dependency on God for possessions, harvests, and the like.

**11:41 rather give alms of such things as ye have:** On one level, Jesus is evidently pointing a critical finger at the Pharisaic practice of tithing even the smallest harvests of “mint and rue and all manner of herbs” and neglecting more important matters (11:42; also 18:12). Another level lies in the expression translated as “such things as ye have” (Greek *ta enonta*), which means “what is inside.” A couple of interpretations suggest themselves: (1) give alms from the heart; (2) from what is within your basket and store, make an alms gift.<sup>117</sup>

**all things are clean unto you:** Jesus' words open several meanings. Is he saying that the proper payment of alms or tithes renders a person clean before God? Is he saying that if Pharisees turn from their “ravening and wickedness” (11:39) they will stand clean in God's sight? Does he mean that when a person offers alms from the heart then washing hands is not necessary for true cleansing? All these interpretations are possible.<sup>118</sup> Significantly, the Joseph Smith Translation changes this verse and brings clarity to Jesus' intent: “if ye would rather [instead] give alms of such things as ye have; and observe to do all things which I have commanded you, then would your inward parts be clean also” (JST 11:42). The addition of “observe to do all things which I have commanded you” implies that some in the gathering have heard him before and makes their response to Jesus' bidding into the condition of becoming clean.

**11:42 woe unto you, Pharisees:** Jesus begins a series of three woes aimed at Pharisees who are more concerned about trivialities of the law, who value their positions in society more than the people whom they should be serving (see 11:42–44), and who knowingly lead others to spiritual ruin.

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116. Plummer, *Luke*, 311.

117. Marshall, *Luke*, 495–96; Morris, *Luke*, 222–23.

118. Marshall, *Luke*, 495.

Later, he will utter three other woes against lawyers for their exclusivity (see 11:44, 46–47, 52).<sup>119</sup>

**ye tithe:** The verb (Greek *apodekatoō*) means literally “to pay out a tenth.”<sup>120</sup> Biblical law requires a person to pay tithes on the harvest of produce, including in the tithe gifts to the needy (see Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22; 26:12–13).

**rue:** An aromatic plant whose leaves are used for flavoring and medicine (Greek *pēganon*).<sup>121</sup> The parallel passage in Matthew 23:23 reads “dill.” Since rue is exempt from tithes in later Jewish law, it is possible that dill is the original item that Jesus mentions.<sup>122</sup>

**judgment:** The term (Greek *krisis*) calls up a wide range of meanings, including the last judgment (see 10:14; 11:31–32; 22:30; Acts 17:31), the standards for judging (see 6:37; 19:22; Acts 23:3; 26:6), and the roles of forgiveness and love in rendering judgment (see 5:23–24; 7:47–50; 12:8; Matt. 6:14–15; 25:40).<sup>123</sup> Because the word likely goes back to the Hebrew *mishpāt*, it also bears the sense of *righteousness*.<sup>124</sup>

**the love of God:** Only here does the Greek noun *agapē* appear in Luke’s writings, though the verb (Greek *agapaō*) occurs frequently (see the Notes on 6:27 and 7:42, 47; see also 6:32, 35; 7:5; 10:27; 11:43; 16:13). Jesus’ expression holds up our love for God, or the love that God requires believers to exhibit, rather than God’s love for us.<sup>125</sup>

**these ought ye to have done:** Beginning with this expression, two important texts omit the rest of this verse (Marcion and manuscript “D”<sup>126</sup>). The second-century teacher Marcion would not like the sentiment because it validates Jewish ceremonial acts, and the copier of manuscript D appears to be influenced by Marcion’s omission. But the authenticity of Jesus’ words is not in doubt. Hence, the saying justifies the ceremonial part of the Old Testament law while holding onto its moral and religious essence, including the principle of tithing (see 16:16–17).<sup>127</sup>

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119. *TLNT*, 2:443–44.

120. *BAGD*, 89.

121. *BAGD*, 661.

122. *Mishnah Shebiith* 9:1; John C. Trever, “Rue,” in *IDB*, 4:129.

123. *TDNT*, 3:936–42.

124. *TDOT*, 9:92–94.

125. Marshall, *Luke*, 498.

126. Marcion’s gospel text is lost and is preserved only in later authors’ quotations; Codex D is a fifth-century manuscript held at Cambridge, England.

127. Plummer, *Luke*, 311; Marshall, *Luke*, 498; Green, *Luke*, 474.

**11:43 *uppermost seats*:** This allusion to synagogue architecture—the “foremost seats” (Greek *prōtokathedria*)<sup>128</sup>—apparently means that either the upper benches at some spot along the synagogue wall, or other designated seats in the building, are seating places for the most important people, as archaeology suggests (see the Notes on 4:16, 20; 6:8; and 20:46).<sup>129</sup>

***greetings*:** The translation, resting on the Greek noun *aspasmos*, should be rendered “the greetings.” At issue is whether Pharisees are greeted first by another person, thus showing respect and deference to them (see the Note on 20:46). The term points exactly to this type of initial greeting. In contrast, Jesus requires his disciples not to wait until another speaks but to be the first to offer a greeting: “first say, Peace be to this house” (10:5; also Matt. 10:12).<sup>130</sup>

**11:44 *scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*:** This set of terms does not appear in the earliest manuscripts of Luke (P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>). Only a limited number of texts preserve this reading, including the two important fifth-century manuscripts designated as “A” and “W.”<sup>131</sup> It appears that a scribe added the expression to harmonize this passage with Matthew 23:27.<sup>132</sup>

***ye are as graves*:** In a most unkind sentiment, Jesus appeals to the Mosaic law that does not allow a person any contact with the dead if that person wants to remain ritually clean (see Lev. 21:1–4, 11; Num. 19:11–22). Here, those who claim to be clean are themselves unclean to such a pitch that they render others unclean by mere touching: “the soul that toucheth [the unclean person] shall be unclean” (Num. 19:22).<sup>133</sup>

***which appear not*:** The Greek word *adēlos* captures the sense of what is indistinct or invisible to the senses: “an uncertain sound” (1 Cor. 14:8).<sup>134</sup>

**11:45 *one of the lawyers*:** For a third time, Luke features someone of this group. The best research concludes that “lawyers” (Greek *nomikos*) and “scribes” (Greek *grammateus*) are interchangeable terms for the same group of people, as the term in 11:53 hints. They are specialists from the

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128. BAGD, 732.

129. Schürer, *History*, 2:441–43; Meyers, “Synagogue,” 6:253–55; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 93–94, 185–86, 337–41.

130. TDNT, 1:496–99; Marshall, *Luke*, 498–99.

131. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 67, 80–81; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:949. Manuscripts A and W are held in the British Library and Freer Museum in Washington, D.C., respectively.

132. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:949.

133. Marshall, *Luke*, 499.

134. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 21; BAGD, 16.

days of Ezra in the study and application of the law of Moses (see the Notes on 7:30 and 10:25).<sup>135</sup>

**Master:** The Greek word is *didaskalos* which may be better rendered “teacher,” a title of respect in Jesus’ day chiefly for one who masters the law (see 2:46; 3:12; 6:40; 8:49; 9:38; the Notes on 7:40, 10:25, 12:13).<sup>136</sup>

**thou reproachest us:** The verb (Greek *hybrizō*) means “to treat with contempt,” “to insult,” or “to abuse.”<sup>137</sup> Plainly, both the language and tone of what Jesus is saying is causing discomfort and pique, an illustration that he can be direct and loudly forceful.

**11:46 Woe unto you also, ye lawyers:** Jesus begins a series of three woes against the lawyers or scribes (see 11:47, 52), which mirror the three that he utters against the Pharisees (see 11:42–44). In contrast with the woes against the Pharisees, here Jesus rails against the exclusivity that the lawyers perpetuate.

**ye lade men with burdens:** The tense of this verb and the next translated “to touch” is present and underscores the current and ongoing actions of these lawyers.<sup>138</sup> Jesus condemns both the nonscriptural requirements and “the lawyers” who generate and perpetuate them. Here his words attack “the tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3, 5), known otherwise as the oral law and claimed by Pharisees to have been received by Moses along with the written law (see Acts 15:5, 10): “Moses received the [oral] Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders.”<sup>139</sup>

**ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers:** Jesus’ words vividly picture the scribes as holding their hands away from a burden, not even allowing a finger to touch it. The question for interpretation is whether the scribes find a way to avoid the requirements that they embrace publicly or whether they stand aside from helping those who are weighed down by such requirements.<sup>140</sup> Jesus may have both in mind.

**11:47 ye build the sepulchres of the prophets:** The term for “sepulchres” (Greek *mnēmeion*) recalls Jesus’ prior saying where it also appears: “ye are as graves which appear not” (11:44). With this expression, Jesus begins a

135. *TDNT*, 4:1088; Schürer, *History*, 2:324–25; Brown and Holzapfel, *Lost 500 Years*, 101, 119, 163.

136. *TDNT*, 2:148–49, 153–57.

137. BAGD, 839.

138. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §318.

139. *Mishnah Pirke Aboth* 1:1, in Danby, *Mishnah*, 446; Alan J. Avery-Peck, “Oral Tradition: Early Judaism,” in *ABD*, 5:34–37.

140. Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2:212–213; Marshall, *Luke*, 500.

chiasmus of the pattern a-b-c-b-a, with the emphasis on “ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers” (11:48).<sup>141</sup> That such tombs exist in Jesus’ day appears in Acts 2:29: “the patriarch David . . . his sepulchre is with us unto this day.”

***your fathers killed them:*** Jesus will again turn to this accusation: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee” (13:34). The scripture text and other tradition preserve such gruesome scenes (see 2 Chr. 24:19–21; *Ascen. Isa.* 1:1–5:14;<sup>142</sup> also Neh. 9:26; Jer. 2:30; Acts 7:52; Mosiah 17:13–20; Hel. 8:19; D&C 127:4). Jesus’ point here sets up his searing observation in the next sentence.

**11:48 *ye bear witness:*** The alternate reading in some manuscripts is literally, “ye are witnesses,” as if the lawyers see with their own eyes the deeds of their ancestors, a more vivid accusation.<sup>143</sup> In either version, Jesus lays guilt at the feet of his accusers.

***ye allow:*** Properly, the verb (Greek *syneudokeō*) means “to approve of” or “to sympathize with,” a much stronger charge.<sup>144</sup>

***their sepulchres:*** The earliest text,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , omits this phrase, as do other early manuscripts, though it is implied. But its omission does not diminish the chiasmic structure of this and the prior verse (see the Note on 11:47).

**11:49 *said the wisdom of God:*** The quotation evidently comes from an unknown source. Here wisdom (Greek *sophia*) takes on a personal aspect, for she possesses both the ability to speak and the power of prophesying (see the Notes on 7:35 and 21:15; Prov. 8:22–30; Mosiah 8:20). A similar saying in Matthew 23:34 is ascribed to Jesus, rather than to God’s wisdom. But the version of the saying preserved by Matthew differs sharply, calling into question whether Matthew and Luke are drawing on the same source, though most judge that they are.<sup>145</sup> If so, then Jesus himself may be “the wisdom of God.”

***I will send:*** The verb (Greek *apostellō*) means “to send forth” and carries the sense of a formal commissioning. Its noun comes into English as “apostle” (see the Notes on 4:18, 43).<sup>146</sup>

141. Green, *Luke*, 474.

142. R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:159–162; Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:156–64.

143. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:950.

144. BAGD, 796.

145. Marshall, *Luke*, 504–5; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:943.

146. BAGD, 98, 99.

***prophets and apostles:*** Luke may have already seen the fulfillment of these words in his day. The term translated “apostles” (Greek *apostolos*), if from an ancient source, may mean originally “one who is sent forth” or “one who is commissioned” rather than members of the Twelve authorized by Jesus (see the Notes on 6:13 and 9:52).<sup>147</sup>

**11:50 *That:*** The Greek particle (*hina*) is not to be understood as announcing the result of slaying and persecuting the prophets (see 11:49), with the meaning “so that,” but rather it is to be read as identifying the frightening purpose of such persecution—those who commit such heinous killings “fill up the measure of their sins and bring the judgment day upon themselves” (see 1 Ne. 18:11; Alma 14:11; 60:13).<sup>148</sup>

***the blood of all the prophets:*** The sweep of Jesus’ words, drawing up images of hate-driven murder, is both horrifying and breathtaking.

***the foundation of the world:*** In New Testament parlance, this phrase holds up to view the beginning of creation (see John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). With the same meaning, it occurs frequently in other scriptural texts (see Moses 5:57; 6:54; 7:47; D&C 29:46; 35:18; 124:33, 41; 132:5; etc.).

***required of this generation:*** This condemnatory declaration is one of the strongest in all of scripture (also repeated in 11:51). It seems clear that Jesus holds contemporary leaders and teachers responsible for turning people away from him (“them that were entering in ye hindered”—11:52). Their guilt is such as to pull down the weight of all martyrs’ blood onto themselves, staining their lives and, metaphorically, their garments beyond Jesus’ cleansing powers, powers that work only for the repentant—“whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins” (Alma 12:34; see also Ex. 34:6–7; Hosea 10:12; Dan. 9:4; Alma 34:15–16; 42:13–26).<sup>149</sup>

**11:51 *From the blood of Abel:*** Jesus seems to be pointing to the long list of martyrs noticed in the Old Testament, beginning with Abel and, in this case, ending with Zacharias who is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20–22, the last book in the Hebrew Bible. Thus Jesus refers to the first martyr noted in scripture and to the last.<sup>150</sup>

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147. *TDNT*, 1:428.

148. *TDNT*, 3:328, n. 46; also Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §369.

149. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 437–40; Bruce C. Hafen, “Justice and Mercy,” in *EM*, 2:775–76.

150. Marshall, *Luke*, 506.

**Abel:** Beginning the catalogue with Abel means that Jesus sees “prophets and apostles” (11:49) as a broad category, especially if one reads the little written about Abel in Genesis 4. But the epistle to the Hebrews offers a richer assessment of this man, noting that by “faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtains witness that he is righteous, God testifying of his gifts” (Heb. 11:4). Further, from other sources we learn that “Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord” and “walked in holiness” (Moses 5:17, 26), and “received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam” (D&C 84:16). Hence, Abel fits, as Jesus declares, among the “prophets and apostles.”<sup>151</sup>

**Zacharias:** The question is, Which Zacharias? The father of John the Baptist? Not so. As a similar passage in Matthew illustrates, Jesus’ reference is rather to Zacharias, son of Jehoiada, whom Jerusalemites stoned c. 840 BC for rebuking them (see 2 Chr. 24:20–22; Matt. 23:35, where “son of Barachias” is incorrect).<sup>152</sup> Importantly, an editorial dated September 1, 1842, and assigned to Joseph Smith, which identifies this Zacharias as the Baptist’s father, does not come from the Prophet’s hand but comes from one of his associates.<sup>153</sup> In fact, the reference to the death of Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, in the *Protevangelium of James* 23–24, which the editorial alludes to, arises more than one hundred years after any such event might have occurred, diminishing its claim to accuracy, for it was composed about AD 150. Additionally, the *Protevangelium of James* relies on the accounts of Luke and Matthew, undercutting its status as a trustworthy, independent record (see the Analysis below).<sup>154</sup> Luke’s passage fits Jesus’ general condemnation of those who build monuments to honor slain prophets (see 11:47–48).

**which perished between the altar and the temple:** The source of this detail may well be 2 Chronicles 24:21, which reports that Zacharias, son of Jehoiada, is stoned “in the court of the house of the Lord,” thus near the altar of sacrifice. The term translated “temple” (Greek *oikos*) means “house,” but appears elsewhere with the meaning “house [of the Lord]” or “temple” (see 19:46; Acts 7:47). The altar of sacrifice stands just outside and down the steps from the sanctuary, to the east.<sup>155</sup>

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151. *TPJS*, 59.

152. Marshall, *Luke*, 506.

153. *TPJS*, 261; Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 91–92; Ogden and Skinner, *Verse by Verse*, 501–2.

154. James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 38; *NTA*, 1.372.

155. BAGD, 562–63; Edersheim, *Temple*, 54–57; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *Ritual of the Temple*, 13, 39.



**11:52 lawyers:** These people are known elsewhere as scribes, as the adjusted title in 11:53 hints (see the Notes on 7:30 and 11:45).

**the key of knowledge:** Jesus seems to hold up not only the parts of scripture but also the sacred rites that scribes fence off as too holy to share with common people, including the nature and meaning of sacred ceremonies, covenants, and laws.<sup>156</sup> The Joseph Smith Translation buttresses this observation by calling “the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scriptures” (JST 11:53), which is the most natural way to read Jesus’ words, namely, “as the obedient knowledge of scripture” (see the Note on 1:77). More than this, such a key opens a door to heavenly knowledge (see D&C 84:19 and the Notes on 4:25; 13:25; 24:31–32, 45).<sup>157</sup>

**ye entered not in yourselves:** In another condemnatory declaration, Jesus denounces the scribes apparently for not entering the kingdom when its doors are open to them. The question, of course, has to do with the place they are entering. Implicitly, the meaning concerns entering the kingdom. But the sense may also point to entering a higher state of knowing God.<sup>158</sup>

**ye hindered:** In light of the above Note, the scribes have not physically hindered people in some way, but have done so in a spiritual and intellectual way by keeping “the key of knowledge” secret, consciously intending “to leave the mass of the people in ignorance.”<sup>159</sup>

**11:53 And as he said these things unto them:** The earliest manuscript for this verse (P<sup>45</sup>) and other early texts read, “And when he had departed from there,” thereby suggesting that only after their unpleasant encounter with Jesus do the scribes and Pharisees hatch their plot. If this expression is original, it forms one of the few notations of Jesus’ travels in this section of Luke’s Gospel (see the Notes on 9:51; 10:38; 17:11; 18:35; 19:28).<sup>160</sup>

**to urge him vehemently:** Luke’s verb (Greek *enechō*) can point to guilt, but here it has to do with carrying a grudge or pressing against something.<sup>161</sup> The adverb translated “vehemently” (Greek *deinōs*) bears the meaning of “to an excess” or “to a terrible pitch.”<sup>162</sup>

**to provoke him:** Luke’s expression has caused discussion since ancient readers began to encounter it. The verb (Greek *apostomatizō*), appearing

156. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 239–42.

157. *TDNT*, 3:744–48; quotation is from 747.

158. Marshall, *Luke*, 507; Morris, *Luke*, 226.

159. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 239.

160. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:951.

161. BAGD, 265; *TDNT*, 2:828.

162. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 374; BAGD, 172.

only here in the New Testament, carries the initial sense “to teach by word of mouth.” But in this passage, it features a hostile meaning, “to interrogate, to question closely,” with the intent of catching Jesus in a careless statement.<sup>163</sup> That this effort is a matter of the Pharisees’ will appears in the Joseph Smith Translation’s addition of one word: “endeavoring to provoke him” (JST 11:54). This simple addition emphasizes his opponents’ hostile motives.

**11:54 *Laying wait:*** The seething hostility of the verb appears in its only other occurrence in the New Testament (Greek *enedreuō*; see Acts 23:21).<sup>164</sup>

***his mouth:*** Luke’s choice of this term, rather than writing another common expression such as “his words” (see 9:26; 10:39; 20:20; 21:33), points back to Jesus’ earlier saying that from “the abundance of the heart [a good man’s] mouth speaketh” (6:45). Moreover, in Luke’s accounts, the mouth is an instrument for conveying God’s truths (see 1:64, 70; 21:15; Acts 1:16; 3:18, 21; 4:25; 8:35; 10:34; 15:7; 22:14). Jesus’ mouth, of course, also brings forth God’s majesty and truth, whether his hearers grasp these dimensions or not (see 4:22; 22:71).<sup>165</sup>

***that they might accuse him:*** The expression does not appear in the earliest manuscripts for this passage,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ . A scribe may have added these words to agree with 6:7.<sup>166</sup>

## Analysis

All three synoptic Gospels record a story that focuses on not washing before a meal. In the reports of Matthew and Mark, the question concerns the criticized behavior of the Savior’s disciples (see Matt. 15:1–9; Mark 7:1–9). In contrast, Luke’s story deals only with Jesus, not his disciples. As in the story of Martha and Mary (see 10:38), Jesus comes without his disciples as a guest in the home of the Pharisee who invites him to the meal. As in another Pharisaic home, other guests come for the event (see 7:36–50). One suspects that, because Jesus is traveling away from Galilee, the guests are not personally acquainted with him but are curious about this teacher from Nazareth whose reputation doubtless precedes him.

The scene in the Pharisee’s home becomes a key moment in Jesus’ ministry.<sup>167</sup> The opposition that has been dogging his steps during recent

163. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 220; BAGD, 99.

164. BAGD, 264.

165. *TDNT*, 7:699–700.

166. Marshall, *Luke*, 508.

167. Johnson, *Luke*, 191.

months, after breaking out in Galilee (see 6:11), seems to have grown rather quiet. But it receives a major boost from the shouting match that erupts in the Pharisee's home. Instead of seeing the event as a spirited difference of opinion, those whom Jesus criticizes—he is being forceful in his criticisms, seizing the high ground—thereafter seek “to provoke him” and “to catch something out of his mouth” (11:53–54). In a word, Jesus' opponents take new life from the heated exchange.

At issue is public style versus inner character. At the meal, Jesus reclines surrounded by people who carry important influence in their society: Pharisees who, as Josephus reminds readers, bear more influence within the populace than any other contemporary group;<sup>168</sup> scribes who are the legal experts and set the tone and parameters of how to obey God's laws that he reveals to Moses and the other prophets.<sup>169</sup> But their influence reeks of self-interest and pride: “ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup . . . but your inward part is full of ravening . . . lawyers [scribes] . . . have taken away the key of knowledge . . . and them that were entering in ye hindered” (11:39, 52). Does the heated exchange lead any in the gathering to see Jesus as Messiah? Likely not. But the scene brings to fulfillment the promise inherent in the notice that, when “the word of God” comes to earth, it does not come to any of the notable and influential persons, who are laden with corruption, but to “John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (3:1–2).

Luke erects the whole passage on the framework of six woes, three uttered by Jesus against the Pharisees and three against the lawyers or scribes. The first of his dark sayings falls generally on Pharisees, without marking any individual, because of tedious attention to tiny, outward efforts—“ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs” but “pass over” what is important in the law, such as “judgment and the love of God” (11:42). Their self-importance, brimming over in the expectation that others will honor them, brings down the second woe on them because of their “love [for] the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets” (11:43). The third breaks thunderously over their heads in the epithet “hypocrites!” and the ringing accusation that “ye are as graves” (11:44). When the scribes, allies of Pharisees, protest that Jesus is reproaching them too, he does not miss a beat, turning to them and scorching their behavior—“ye lade men with burdens . . . and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers”

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168. Josephus, *B.J.* 2.8.14 (§162); 2.17.3 (§411); Josephus, *A.J.* 18.1.4 (§15).

169. Brown and Holzapfel, *Lost 500 Years*, 119, 122–25.

(11:46). His second woe crashes down on their inner disdain for prophets past as well as on their pretended eagerness to “build their sepulchres” as memorials of honor (11:47–48). His third and last woe drives hard against their failed stewardship over “the key of knowledge” which they turn in God’s lock neither for themselves nor for others (see 11:52).<sup>170</sup>

We suspect that Jesus purposely omits washing his hands or immersing himself in the company of the other guests, knowing full well how they will receive his disregard for a commonly revered practice. He seems anxious to make his point to these influential guests that external, public actions disclose little of a person’s state of being, even though the guests view hand-washing as possessing deep religious significance. Rather, he quickly leads their minds to ultimate values in contrast to societal flash: inner cleanness (“ye are as graves”) and “love of God” and proper discharge of responsibilities (“them that were entering in ye hindered”). His words and actions point to his schooled observations about human nature—often, as soon as a person acquires “a little authority,” that person “will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion” (D&C 121:39).

An intriguing issue has to do with the relationship between the scene narrated by Luke and a similar incident that appears in Matthew’s Gospel wherein Jesus denounces scribes and Pharisees at length and in similar language (see Matt. 23:1–36). The differences between the accounts are sharp, including the order of Jesus’ sayings and their context. In fact, Luke’s portrait of a meal-setting for Jesus’ harangue leads some to discount the entire scene as historical.<sup>171</sup> It seems safe to conclude that the differences between Matthew and Luke are decisive and that the two authors have drawn on independent memories, or that Matthew has expanded the incident.<sup>172</sup>

One further coloration requires comment. On September 1, 1842, an editorial ran in the *Times and Seasons* that points to this passage and, in light of the *Protevangelium of James* 23–24, claims that the martyred Zacharias is the Baptist’s father.<sup>173</sup> The issue has to do with whether Joseph Smith pens that editorial. In fact, there are problems with attributing the editorial to Joseph Smith, who otherwise puts his prophetic stamp on the notion that the Zacharias noted in Luke 11:51 is John’s father. Richard L. Anderson has gathered information which proves that the editorial is not that of the

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170. Marshall, *Luke*, 490–91.

171. Bultmann, *History*, 334; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:944.

172. Marshall, *Luke*, 491–93, 501.

173. Reprinted in *TPJS*, 261.

Prophet Joseph Smith. Because of Anderson's careful efforts, we can make four strong circumstantial observations. (1) The editorial is unsigned. Typically, Joseph Smith signs his letters and editorials, as in the cases of Doctrine and Covenants 127 and 128 which the Prophet draws up in the early days of September 1842. (2) The editorial is written in the third person, not first person; the latter is the preferred style of Joseph Smith. Again, Doctrine and Covenants 127 and 128 serve as comparisons. (3) During August 1842, Joseph Smith is in hiding, moving from home to home among members of the church to avoid arrest. Although evidence exists that he hides in Nauvoo during the month of August, as well as in nearby communities, he will have enjoyed little opportunity to pen a long editorial. (4) The writing style of the *Times and Seasons* editorial matches that of W. W. Phelps most closely, not the Prophet Joseph. Consequently, the overwhelming heft of the evidence leads to the conclusion that Joseph Smith does not write the editorial in question and therefore we look to the Old Testament as the referent in Jesus' words (see the Note on 11:51).<sup>174</sup>

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174. Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 94–95.