

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class

Popular Proverbial Phrases Inspired by Bible Passages

Mark 3:22-27 “A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand”

²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons He casts out the demons.” ²³ And He called them to Him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”

Verse 22: “Scribes” are those whose job it was to copy the books of the Hebrew Scriptures by hand. Thus, they would have become very familiar with it. They were the “Bible scholars” of first century Judaism. It must have been important for them to investigate this Jesus of Nazareth. They literally had to “come down from Jerusalem (2400 feet above sea level) to the shore of the Sea of Galilee (600 feet below sea level) and make the 80-mile trip north. Figurately, they are coming down in that they would see Jesus as beneath them in importance and knowledge of the Scriptures. They are ready to pass a quick judgment on one they believe is a fake, a fraud and a phony.

But their judgment is not one that they address to Jesus directly. They were spreading their condemnation around to the crowd behind His back. They could not refute the miracles that Jesus is doing, but they dare not admit that His power is of divine origin. Their accusation is that Jesus is in league with the devil himself (“Beelzebul, meaning, “lord of the flies”), that is why He has the ability to cast out demons.

2nd Kings 1:2 Now Ahaziah (King of Israel) fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, “Go, inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.”

Verses 23-24: Either by divine all-knowingness (omniscience) or simply by human overhearing, Jesus realizes what these scribes are saying about Him. He calls them to Himself to answer their charges “in parables” (meaning that He is speaking in figurative language). His argument is simple and easy to understand. Why would Satan cast out his

own demons? This would not work in an earthly kingdom. It will not last if it is divided against itself (think of today's political environment in the United States).

While many in our world want to deny the existence of Satan and hell, saying that these were made up by the medieval church to scare people into obedience, Jesus words let us know that Satan exists and has power to use against us.

Verses 25-26: Now Jesus quotes Abraham Lincoln (or so many people might think, e.g. a billboard on I-55 North just south of AB brewery in St. Louis which quotes these words but has Lincoln's picture next to them). Lincoln quoted Jesus in a June 16, 1858 speech at the Illinois Republican convention in Springfield after being chosen to run for the US Senate against incumbent Senator Stephen A. Douglas. Not only is what Jesus says inspired godly wisdom, it also makes sanctified common sense. If Satan were to work against himself in this way, he would be coming to his end (which Jesus will do for him anyway).

From verses 20 and 32 we learn that Jesus' own "house," that is, His family, is concerned about Him, coming to "seize" Him, thinking that "He is out of His mind." But He points out that His true family are believers, those who do "the will of God."

Verse 27: Jesus' next argument in rebuttal to the scribes' accusation is a parable using the image of robbery. If one is going to rob the house of a strong man, he first must bind that man, tie him up, before he could take his stuff. Only one stronger than Satan can plunder Satan's household ("ruler of this world") and rescue those who are held captive by his demonic agents. Christ has ransomed and redeemed us from Satan's power. Death is Satan's greatest weapon against us and since the resurrection of Jesus, this weapon has lost its edge.

Colossians 1:13-14 ¹³ *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*