

*“He Who is Not With Me is Against Me;  
And He Who Does Not Gather With Me Scatters”*

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Our text is found in Matthew and Luke, but excluded from Mark. If we follow Mark's reading, Matthew 12:30 is wedged between the statements concerning the strong one and the sin of blasphemy (Mark 3:27, 28). In looking at the passage there is a primary idea.

Jesus is King, and His kingdom has overthrown the prince of the power of the air. He is removing enslaved citizens of darkness and transferring them into the kingdom of light. The story begun in Genesis is coming to fruition in the arrival of the woman's seed, the seed of Abraham and of David. Jesus has subjugated sin, separation, and Satan. He has conquered and we are living in His victory. Jesus Christ is the victor. He has destroyed all of His opponents. All who oppose Him will bow before Him.

Early church father, Augustine, noted how, “**Christ came to plunder the strong man's good - the devil's hold upon the ungodly.**” ([emphasis added] Augustine, in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II - Mark, 41). Jesus has dethroned the Devil; the one who bound others would now be bound. The text shows us two kingdoms in conflict. One sits in a position of possessor, and the other comes to take back what is rightfully His. Ultimately the two lie in mortal combat. It is impossible for the two ever to be reconciled.

Both Matthew (12:30) and Luke (11:23) draw the line in the sand as it relates to these two kingdoms. Sides are chosen and a decision is called for, “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.” **There is no middle ground in the kingdom of God. You are either in or out, you are either for Him or against Him, but you are never both.**

What is truly exciting is for us to see how Jesus Christ sits as a conquering King. He is the victor. He has won. The outcome and conclusion of the matter has already been settled. Nothing more can be added and nothing more can be subtracted. Jesus Christ is the stronger one. He has bound the Devil and has “plundered his house.” What is equally arresting from the text is the idea of choice. You are either for Christ or against Him, but you are never neutral or both.

No one enters the kingdom of heaven in any other way than by a choice of the will. If you have never chosen Christ, then you are still in a kingdom of darkness under the kingship of Satan. In your non-choice of Christ, you continue to choose the Devil.

All three Gospel's note how if one has sided with the Devil, then they will never be forgiven. The idea is not a point-in-time decision, but a life-long pattern of choosing Satan over God. It is always of interest to me to see how the gospel is an either this or

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that proposition. No one can serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). You cannot be a friend of the world and of God at the same time (James 4:4). You are either born of the devil or born of God (1 John 3:8ff). You either have a love for the children of God or you do not, but the two are not inter-mingled (1 John 4:20).

As it relates to our text, "He who is not with [Jesus] is against [Jesus]; and he who does not gather with [Jesus], scatters." As noted earlier, "There is no middle ground in the kingdom of God. You are either in or out, you are either for Him or against Him, but you are never both."

We have a tendency to downplay the Kingdom imagery contained in the New Testament. We do not see the idea of captivity and freedom or even citizenship when reading the gospel, yet this is the description used all the way through. We were citizens of darkness and now we are citizens of light.

When the religious establishment accused Jesus of being demonically energized they made a clear break from Him. They openly showed how they were identified as enemies of Christ and His work. It is my continued prayer that we would not live blind to these truths, that we would fully embrace our position as sons and citizens of His kingdom, and that we would embrace the larger body of Christ who are equally committed to the King.