

Luke 11:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

Analysis

If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Jesus applies the divided kingdom principle specifically to Satan's realm. The conditional "if" (εἰ, ei) introduces a reductio ad absurdum—if the Pharisees' accusation were true, Satan would be self-destructing. The phrase "his kingdom" (ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, hē basileia autou) acknowledges Satan's organized dominion over fallen angels and unregenerate humanity—a counterfeit kingdom opposing God's rule.

Because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. Jesus directly confronts His accusers' logic. If He, empowered by Beelzebub, destroys demons, then Satan's forces war against themselves—an impossibility for any kingdom intending to survive. The argument's brilliance lies in forcing opponents to choose: either admit Jesus operates by God's power, or maintain an absurd position that Satan deliberately undermines his own kingdom. This exposes the bankruptcy of their accusation and their willful blindness to truth. The passage also reveals Satan's kingdom as real but ultimately doomed—its temporary success cannot prevent its final overthrow at Christ's return (Revelation 20:10).

Historical Context

Jewish theology in Jesus' day recognized Satan (called by various names: Beelzebub, Belial, Mastema) as a real spiritual adversary who led rebellious angels and opposed God's purposes. The Dead Sea Scrolls describe cosmic conflict

between the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness. Jesus doesn't dispute Satan's power or kingdom but argues that His exorcisms prove Satan's kingdom is being plundered, not served. This aligns with His later statement: 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven' (Luke 10:18).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus' acknowledgment of Satan's 'kingdom' teach about the organized nature of spiritual opposition to God's rule?
2. How does understanding Satan's kingdom as real but doomed shape Christian engagement in spiritual warfare?
3. Why is it logically necessary that Jesus' exorcisms demonstrate God's power rather than Satan's, given Satan's self-interest in preserving his kingdom?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	καὶ	ὁ	Σατανᾶς	ἐφ'	ἑαυτὸν	διεμερίσθη	πῶς
G1487	If	G2532	G3588	Satan	against	himself	he divided	how
	G1161			G4567	G1909	G1438	G1266	G4459
σταθήσεται	ἡ	βασιλεία	αὐτοῦ	ὅτι	λέγετε	ἐν		
shall		G3588	kingdom	his	because	ye say	through	
G2476			G932	G846	G3754	G3004	G1722	
Βεελζεβούλ	ἐκβάλλειν	με	τὰ	δαιμόνια				
Beelzebub	cast out	that I	G3588	devils				
G954	G1544	G3165		G1140				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 12:26 (Kingdom): And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

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