

Luke 11:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

Analysis

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Jesus introduces an ad hominem argument that devastates His critics. The phrase "your sons" (οἱ γιοὶ ὑμῶν, hoi huioi humōn) refers to Jewish exorcists among the Pharisees' own disciples and followers. Jewish exorcism was practiced (cf. Acts 19:13-16 for 'sons of Sceva'), though with limited success compared to Jesus' authority. Jesus' logic is inescapable: if He casts out demons by Beelzebub, then the Pharisees' own exorcists must also be using demonic power—a conclusion they would never accept.

Therefore shall they be your judges. The phrase "they be your judges" (αὐτοὶ ὑμῶν κριταὶ ἔσονται, autoi humōn kritai esontai) means the Pharisees' own disciples will condemn their hypocrisy. Their double standard—accepting exorcisms from their own while attributing identical works by Jesus to Satan—exposes prejudice rather than principle. This argument doesn't validate Jewish exorcism techniques but uses His opponents' own assumptions against them, demonstrating the inconsistency and malice underlying their accusation.

Historical Context

Archaeological and literary evidence confirms Jewish exorcism practices in the first century. Josephus describes Jewish exorcists using Solomon's formulas, roots, and incantations. The Testament of Solomon and magical papyri preserve elaborate rituals. Unlike these complex methods requiring intermediaries, Jesus

expelled demons with simple commands, demonstrating unique authority. The Pharisees' acceptance of their own exorcists' limited successes while rejecting Jesus' superior power reveals their opposition was theological and political, not evidential.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' argument expose the double standards and prejudice often underlying religious criticism of God's work?
2. What does the existence of 'your sons' (Jewish exorcists) teach about God's common grace allowing even unregenerate people to occasionally accomplish good?
3. In what ways do contemporary Christians apply inconsistent standards when evaluating spiritual gifts or miracles in others versus their own traditions?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ἐγὼ	ἐν	Βεελζεβοὺλ	ἐκβάλλουσιν	τὰ	δαιμόνια
if	And	I	by	Beelzebub	cast out	G3588	devils
G1487	G1161	G1473	G1722	G954	G1544		G1140
οἱ	υἱοὶ	ὑμῶν	ἐν	τίνι	ἐκβάλλουσιν	διὰ	τοῦτο
G3588	sons	your	by	whom	cast out	therefore	G5124
G5207	G5216	G1722	G5101	G1544	G1223		
κριταὶ	ὑμῶν	αὐτοὶ	ἔσονται				
judges	your	G846	shall they be				
G2923	G5216		G2071				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 9:49 (Evil): And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.

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