

Matthew 12:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Analysis

Jesus responds to Pharisees' absurd accusation with logic: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.' This principle—internal division destroys—is universally recognized. Kingdoms torn by civil war collapse; cities divided cannot function; families at odds disintegrate. The Greek 'divided against itself' (μερισθεῖσα καθ' ἑαυτῆς/meristheisa kath' heautēs) emphasizes internal splitting. Jesus applies this to Pharisees' accusation: if Satan casts out his own demons, he's divided against himself and his kingdom falls. The argument is irrefutable. Reformed theology observes Jesus's apologetic method: appealing to reason and observable reality. Faith doesn't require abandoning logic; rather, unbelief often requires abandoning logic. The verse also has application beyond demonology: churches divided against themselves cannot stand; Christian movements torn by internal conflict fail; believers at odds with themselves (double-minded) lack stability. Unity isn't uniformity but shared purpose and mutual support under Christ.

Historical Context

Civil wars frequently devastated ancient kingdoms: Roman civil wars (Pompey vs Caesar, Octavian vs Antony), Jewish civil war during Roman siege (Josephus records factions fighting each other while Romans besieged Jerusalem, hastening city's fall in 70 AD). Jesus's audience knew this reality. House division was equally familiar: inheritance disputes, family feuds, and factional splits regularly destroyed

households. Jesus's logic was therefore universally compelling—everyone recognized that internal division causes collapse. The Pharisees couldn't refute this argument. Their accusation that Jesus cast out demons by Satan's power required believing Satan was undermining his own authority—absurd. If exorcisms proved demonic division, Satan's kingdom was collapsing—hardly making him effective patron for Jesus. The argument exposed Pharisees' bad faith: they weren't seeking truth but manufacturing accusations. Throughout history, Jesus's principle has proven true: divided churches decline, split movements fail, conflicted individuals struggle. Unity under truth, maintained by love, is essential for health and effectiveness.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What divisions in your life—internal conflicts, relational strife, or spiritual double-mindedness—are undermining your spiritual vitality?
2. How does Jesus's logical apologetic method inform Christian engagement with skeptics and critics?
3. What does this teach about the necessity of church unity—how should congregations maintain it without compromising truth?

Interlinear Text

εἰδὼς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτοῖς εἶπεν
knew **And** ^{G3588} **Jesus** ^{G3588} **thoughts** **their** **and said**
G1492 G1161 G2424 G1761 G846 G2036

αὐτοῖς πᾶσα βασιλεία μερισθεῖσα καθ' ἑαυτῆς
their **Every** **kingdom** **divided** **against** **itself**
G846 G3956 G932 G3307 G2596 G1438

ἐρημοῦται καὶ πᾶσα πόλις ἢ οἰκία μερισθεῖσα
is brought to desolation **and** **Every** **city** **or** **house** **divided**
G2049 G2532 G3956 G4172 G2228 G3614 G3307

καθ' ἑαυτῆς οὐ σταθήσεται
against **itself** **not** **shall**
G2596 G1438 G3756 G2476

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 5:15 (Parallel theme): But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Jeremiah 17:10 (Parallel theme): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

1 Corinthians 2:11 (Parallel theme): For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Matthew 9:4 (References Jesus): And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Isaiah 9:21 (Parallel theme): Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Revelation 16:19 (Parallel theme): And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Hebrews 4:13 (Parallel theme): Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Psalms 139:2 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Mark 2:8 (References Jesus): And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

Revelation 2:23 (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.