

Matthew 12:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Analysis

'And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?' Jesus applies the division principle specifically to Pharisees' accusation. If Satan casts out Satan—if demons expel demons—then Satan's kingdom is internally divided and cannot stand. The rhetorical question expects obvious answer: it can't. The argument is airtight. Reformed theology observes that evil, though powerful, is ultimately self-destructive. Sin doesn't build; it erodes. Satan doesn't create; he corrupts. Demonic power doesn't heal; it harms. For Satan to empower Jesus to cast out demons and heal people would contradict his destructive nature. The verse also reveals Satan has a 'kingdom' (βασιλεία/basileia)—organized realm of evil operating systematically against God's kingdom. Spiritual warfare is real: two kingdoms, two kings, two opposing purposes. But Satan's kingdom is doomed—already defeated at the cross (Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14), awaiting final judgment (Revelation 20:10). Meanwhile, Christ's kingdom advances, Satan's declines.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish theology recognized Satan as adversary of God and humanity, commanding demons (fallen angels) in organized opposition to God's purposes. Intertestamental literature (Book of Enoch, Jubilees, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs) developed elaborate demonology. Jesus acknowledged this reality while emphasizing His superior authority. His exorcisms demonstrated kingdom of God overcoming kingdom of Satan (Matthew 12:28). Early church continued this battle:

Paul describes spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18), John affirms Christ's purpose was destroying devil's works (1 John 3:8), Revelation depicts ultimate victory (Revelation 20:7-10). Throughout history, church has maintained belief in Satan's reality and organized opposition while emphasizing Christ's victory. Modern skepticism often dismisses spiritual warfare as primitive mythology—but Scripture, church tradition, and missionary experience consistently testify to demonic reality. The comfort: Satan's kingdom is divided and falling; Christ's kingdom is unified and advancing. The battle is real, but the outcome is certain.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Satan as having an organized but ultimately doomed kingdom affect your perspective on spiritual warfare and evil in the world?
2. What evidence do you see of Satan's kingdom being internally divided and self-destructive?
3. How does knowing Christ has already defeated Satan at the cross provide assurance in ongoing spiritual battles?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἰ ὁ Σατανᾶν τὸν Σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλει ἐφ'
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ἐαυτὸν ἐμερίσθη· πῶς οὖν σταθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία
himself he is divided how then shall his kingdom
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αὐτοῦ
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Additional Cross-References

Colossians 1:13 (Kingdom): Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

1 John 5:19 (Parallel theme): And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

Revelation 9:11 (Kingdom): And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

Revelation 16:10 (Kingdom): And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

Revelation 12:9 (Parallel theme): And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Matthew 4:10 (Parallel theme): Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

John 16:11 (Parallel theme): Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

John 14:30 (Parallel theme): Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

John 12:31 (Parallel theme): Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (Parallel theme): In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

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