

Matthew 12:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

'And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.' Jesus's second argument: Jewish exorcists—'your children' (οἱ νιοὶ ὑμῶν/hoi huioi hymōn), meaning disciples or followers—also performed exorcisms. If Jesus casts out demons by Satan's power, what power do they use? Same logic applies to them. The Pharisees' response would be: our exorcists operate by God's power. Jesus's point: by what standard do you attribute their exorcisms to God but mine to Satan? Your own practitioners will 'judge' (κριταὶ ἔσονται/kritai esontai) you—exposing your inconsistency. Reformed theology observes Jesus's rhetorical skill: He catches opponents in logical contradiction using their own assumptions. The verse also indicates first-century Judaism practiced exorcism. Acts records Jewish exorcists (Acts 19:13-16). Their success rate varied; Jesus's exorcisms were always immediate, complete, and authoritative—demonstrating superior power. The argument: if you acknowledge some exorcisms are from God, you must have consistent criteria. Applied consistently, Jesus's exorcisms obviously manifest divine power.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism had professional exorcists using various methods: invoking Solomon's name, magical formulas, herbal remedies, incantations. Josephus describes Jewish exorcists; rabbinic literature discusses their practices. Acts 19:13-16 records itinerant Jewish exorcists attempting to use Jesus's name as magical formula—with disastrous results. Jesus's exorcisms differed

fundamentally: no formulas, no rituals, no struggling—just authoritative command. Demons immediately obeyed. His success was universal and instant, unlike variable results of Jewish exorcists. Yet Pharisees accepted their fellow Jews' exorcisms as legitimate while attributing Jesus's to Satan—demonstrating bias, not rational assessment. 'Your children' could also refer to Pharisees' spiritual descendants—future generations who'd recognize Pharisees' error and condemn their rejection of Messiah. Church tradition sees this as prophetic: Jewish converts to Christianity indeed 'judged' their forebears' rejection of Jesus. The argument remains relevant: those who acknowledge supernatural activity in some contexts but deny it in others demonstrate inconsistency revealing bias rather than reasoned judgment.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you ensure consistent criteria when evaluating claims of supernatural activity rather than accepting some and rejecting others based on bias?
2. What does Jesus's superior exorcistic power demonstrate about His unique authority and identity?
3. In what ways do inconsistent applications of standards reveal underlying prejudice or predetermined conclusions?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἰ ἐγὼ ἐν Βεελζεβοὺλ ἐκβάλλουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils

G2532 G1487 G1473 G1722 G954 G1544 G3588 G1140

οἱ νἱοὶ ὑμῶν ἐν τίνι ἐκβάλλουσιν διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοὶ

G3588 children do your by whom cast out therefore they

G5207 G5216 G1722 G5101 G1544 G5124 G846

ὑμῶν ἔσονται κριταὶ

do your shall be judges

G5216 G2071 G2923

Additional Cross-References

Romans 3:19 (Parallel theme): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Luke 11:19 (Judgment): And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

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