

Matthew 9:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

Analysis

The Pharisees' accusation that Jesus cast out demons 'through the prince of the devils' (Beelzebub) reveals their willful spiritual blindness. Having witnessed undeniable miracles, they cannot deny the supernatural power, so they attribute it to Satan—a blasphemous attempt to explain away Christ's divine authority. This accusation foreshadows the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31-32), where persistent rejection of clear divine evidence hardens into irreversible unbelief. The charge is logically absurd—why would Satan cast out his own forces?—yet it demonstrates how desperately the religious establishment sought to maintain control. Reformed theology recognizes this as judicial hardening, where God gives persistent rejecters over to their chosen delusion (Romans 1:24-28). The Pharisees' response contrasts sharply with the multitudes who marveled (v.33), showing that the same evidence produces vastly different responses depending on the condition of the heart.

Historical Context

The Pharisees were Judaism's most influential religious party in first-century Palestine, with approximately 6,000 members wielding enormous influence over synagogues. Beelzebub (literally 'lord of the flies') was originally a mocking name for the Philistine god Baal-zebub (2 Kings 1:2), but by Jesus's time had become a title for Satan himself. The accusation was a calculated political move—the Pharisees needed to explain away His miracles without acknowledging His divine authority, which would undermine their own position.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the Pharisees' response to clear evidence teach us about the danger of spiritual pride and preconceived theological systems?
2. How can religious knowledge and zeal actually harden someone against truth rather than opening them to it?
3. In what ways do modern skeptics employ similar strategies when confronted with evidence of God's work?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	Φαρισαῖοι	ἔλεγον	Ἐν	τῷ	ἄρχοντι	τῶν
G3588	But	the Pharisees			G3588	the prince	G3588
G1161		G5330				G758	
δαιμόνια	ἐκβάλλει	τὰ	δαιμόνια				
devils	He casteth out	G3588	devils				
G1140		G1544					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 11:15 (Evil): But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

Mark 3:22 (Evil): And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

John 3:20 (Evil): For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

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