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Every Kingdom Divided Against Itself Will Be Ruined Matthew 12:25-29 and Mark 3:23-27

Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined DIG: What precipitated this exchange between our Lord and the Pharisees and Torah-teachers? What four defenses did Jesus give in answer to their accusations then? What four defenses does He have today? Why did Jesus point to what the Pharisees' followers were doing? Why was that a problem? Who is the strong man in Christ's illustration? The thief? When will Satan ultimately get what is coming to him?

REFLECT: When are we adopted into God's family? How does Yeshua picture Himself as more powerful than Satan? How do you think the Son of God felt having to defend Himself against the claims of the sinful, prideful Pharisees and Torah-teachers? How do you think He feels about having His name blasphemed by godless sinners of today? Are you doing your part in defending His name against satanic attacks today?

The Gospels gradually reveal more and more about whom **Yeshua** was and who **He** was not. After His **second messianic miracle** of healing a blind mute, **Jesus** was rejected as **Messiah** by the Sanhedrin (**to see link click Lg - The Great Sanhedrin**) who claimed that **He** was **possessed by Beelzebub!** They claimed: **By the prince of demons He is driving out demons** (see **Ek - It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons that This Fellow Drives Out Demons**). Although **the Pharisees and the Torah-teacher's** who came down from Jerusalem were speaking to the crowd beyond **the Lord's** hearing, **He** knew their thoughts. So **Jesus** called them over to Him and began to speak to them (Mark 3:22a-23). Not awed by **their** position, **Jesus defended Himself against their satanic attacks in four specific ways:**

First, the accusation could not be true because it would mean a division in Satan's kingdom. **Yeshua** could not let such serious charges go unanswered. Being omniscient, **He** knew their thoughts and began to speak to them in parables: **Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan opposes himself, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? He** will have destroyed **himself and his end** will

have **come** (Matthew 12:25-26; Mark 3:23-26). Why would **the Adversary** want to perform a miracle by driving **himself** and other **demons out**? That would make no sense. While it is true that evil is destructive by nature, it is also true that although there is no harmony, trust, or loyalty in **Satan's kingdom**, **he** certainly tolerates no disobedience or division. Consequently, **Satan cannot be divided against himself**. Out of jealousy and self-righteousness, **the Pharisees** had become blind to the obvious. By driving out **demons** and healing people, **Jesus** was *destroying* **the Adversary's** kingdom, not *building* it.



Secondly, they themselves had long recognized that exorcism was a gift from God. **Messiah** showed that **the Pharisees** accusation was also prejudiced, revealing the corrupt, wicked bias of **their** cold, black hearts. It should be noted that other rabbis had also driven out **demons**. So, **Jesus** asks those religious leaders accusing **Him** of **demon** possession: **Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons drive them out?** The word **sons** is often used as a description for disciples or followers in the TaNaKh, as **sons** of the prophets as used in **Second Kings 2:3 NASB**. Certain **followers** or **sons** of **the Pharisees** had driven out **demons**, and the Jewish historian Josephus tells us that **they** used many strange, exotic incantations and cultic formulas in **their** rituals. **They** would never have claimed those activities were ungodly, much less satanic. To put **His** opponents on the theological hot seat, **Jesus** suggested that **the Pharisees** let **their** exorcist **followers** be **their judges**. He said: **So then, they will be your judges** (Matthew 12:27; Luke 11:18-19). The implied suggestion was that **they** ask those **followers** by whose power **they drove out evil spirits**. If **they** said, "By **Satan's** power," **they** would condemn **themselves** and **the Pharisees** who supported **them**. But, if **they** said, "By **God's** power," **they** would undercut **the Pharisees'** accusation against **Yeshua**.⁶⁶⁰ Once again **the Lord** had **them** in checkmate. Oh, how they hated that!

Thirdly, the healing of the blind mute authenticated the claim that Jesus was the Meshiach. Only the true **God of Isra'el** would want to build up **His Kingdom** in such a positive manner. **But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the**

kingdom of God has come upon you, or is in your midst (**Matthew 12:28**). If **Jesus** did **His** work **by the Spirit of God**, then **His** miracles were of **God** and **He** had to be **the Messiah**, the son of David, just as **all the people** said **He** was (**Matthew 12:23**). In one sense, **Yeshua** will not reign on earth until **His** messianic **Kingdom**, and after that the Eternal State (see my commentary on **Revelation Fq - The Eternal State**). But, in its broadest sense, **Christ's Kingdom** is the sphere of **His** rule in any place or dispensation. **He** is **the King** wherever **He** may be, and those who love **Him** are **His** subjects; therefore, **His Kingdom** was always with **Him** during **His** earthly ministry. **For God has rescued us from the domain of darkness**, Rabbi Sha'ul says, **and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13 CJB)**. All believers are adopted into **His Kingdom** the moment they receive **the King** as their **Lord and Savior** (see **Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**).

Fourthly, Jesus shows that He is stronger than Satan. He is invading the domain of the Adversary. The kingdom of God is breaking in taking **Satan's possessions**, or lost souls away from **him**. **Yeshua** is releasing people from **the devil's** power. **The Pharisees** were spiritually blind, for **they** could not see that everything **the Lord** said and did was opposed to **Satan**. **Jesus** used the figure of a thief who planned to rob **a strong man's house** while **he** was there. The thief knows that unless he first ties up **the strong man**, he has no chance of being successful and, in fact, risks being arrested or seriously beaten up in the process. **Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house (Matthew 12:29; Mk 3:27)**. It must, therefore, be someone stronger than **Beelzebub** who is able to deliver us from such **demonic** oppression. The deathblow to **the Adversary** was inflicted at the cross and will be fully realized in the future, but before that ultimate victory **Messiah** repeatedly demonstrates **His** limitless and unrestricted power to achieve **His** desired purposes.

Besides being a dynamic testimony in first-century Isra'el, this situation is a joyful reminder for all believers in our day. While **the devil** still **prowl[s] around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (First Peter 5:8)**, we are promised divine protection as we keep on **the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18)**. Although we have a promised victory, we should also be wise enough to realize that the spiritual battle **will** last until **Satan** is finally **thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet will be thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fm - Satan Will Be Released from His Prison and Deceive the Nations**).⁶⁶¹

How is Yeshua Messiah defended against satanic attacks today? Once again, there are four specific ways:

First, the Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus encouraged His apostles by the promise of **the Spirit's** work in the world. As the work of Yeshua was to promote **the Father** and not **Himself**, so **the Ruach** will witness to Jesus as **the Messiah: The Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father - He will testify about Me, and I know that His testimony about Me is true** (John 5:32 and 14:26b).

Secondly, the universal Church testifies that Yeshua is the Meshiach. The Spirit is sent from **the Father** (John 14:26a), just as **the Son** was sent from **the Father**. Yet this mysterious work of **the Ruach** is not done in isolation from the Church. **The talmidim** were to bear witness to the facts that **they** came to know: **And you must also testify** (Yochanan 15:26b). As **the Twelve** witnessed, **the Holy Spirit** convicted, and people were saved. The same combination of human obedience to the divine command (**Acts 1:8**) coupled with the witness of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** is needed in every generation.⁶⁶²

Thirdly, the Word of God testifies that the Lord is the Expected One. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. And the Word was with God, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son. And the Word was God, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (Yochanan 1:1 and 14).

Fourthly, and as His ambassadors, we need to testify that He is the Anointed One. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us (Second Corinthians 5:20a). As in our day, being an **ambassador** in ancient times was an important and highly regarded duty. An **Ambassador** is both a messenger for and a representative of the one who sent him or her, and believers are messengers and representatives of the court of heaven. Though **our citizenship is in heaven** (Philippians 3:20), we testify that **the Savior of Sinners is the Messiah**, where we live **as aliens and strangers** (First Peter 2:11). As His representatives, we don't have to be perfect (sometimes our halo slips), but, we do need to be aware of our responsibility to testify that **if you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"** (Romans 10:9).

*Lord Jesus, by Your cross, you opened the way for us to know freedom. Teach us to trust in Your victory over the devil. Empower us to live by faith in You, while waiting for the victory You have promised.*⁶⁶³