

# SATAN

## **Matthew 12:22–29**

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.  
23 All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”  
24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”  
25 Jesus knew their thoughts and

said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 “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 plunder his house.

# Reflection

The Pharisees are now openly plotting to kill Jesus. They have been vocal opponents for some time, probably since Jesus' sermon series in the Sermon on the Mount. Not for a moment has Jesus pulled his punches when it comes to the Pharisees. Almost immediately after the Beatitudes Jesus was preaching lines like this from Matthew 5:20,

20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

No long after, in chapter 6, Jesus attacked their self-righteous show that was making

a mockery of the three pillars of Judaism: announcing their giving to the needy with trumpets; praying loudly in the market places; and walking around with disfigured faces letting the whole world know when they were fasting.

And so it comes as no surprise that the Pharisees are out to kill him; it's no surprise because it's his design. Jesus has come to die for the sins of the world, and the whole world will have a hand in his death; his Jewish brothers will hand him over to the Gentile Romans who will kill him. But not today.

If you say a lie loudly enough and often enough people will believe it, sometimes you may even begin to believe it's true yourself. Roman Emperor Nero did this

when be blamed Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome in the first century. Adolf Hitler used the same technique in blaming Germany's post-World War I economic troubles on the Jews. The Pharisees are attempting something similar here.

In fact, they'd been at it for a while. They've publically accused Jesus of blaspheming, eating with tax collectors and sinners, breaking the Sabbath, and twice now performing exorcisms by the power of Satan – hoping that one of these lies will stick. Later they'll change their tack, and send Jesus to his death over his claim to being 'the King of the Jews', protesting to Pilate, to their unspeakable shame, that God's people 'have no king but Caesar.'

How could the leaders of God's people

kill the son of God? The answer is sin. But before we become too critical of them it is good for us to ask a similar question of ourselves. Knowing what we know of Jesus, how is it that we sin as we do? And because of our sin, Jesus needed to die, so whether it is directly like the Pharisees, or indirectly through our personal sin, we all had a hand in the death of Jesus. Jesus didn't just die for me; he died because of me. But how could they do it? For the Pharisees, the answer was jealousy. The synagogues were emptying and the countryside was filling as people stopped following them and started following him.

The people were no fools. Again we read in our passage today that they were astonished at Jesus' words and his power. And they knew the Scriptures. Jesus has

just healed a demon possessed man who was both blind and mute – imagine being him – utterly helpless in the world, utterly unable to save himself, then healed, seeing and being able to thank for the very first time those selfless people who had cared for him their whole lives. And no doubt fall on his knees and worship Jesus. The crowds knew their Scriptures. The only person in the Old Testament credited with driving out a demon is king David. ‘Could this be the Son of David?’ The Messiah, the Promised One, come to deliver God’s people from the Romans and reign on the throne of David for ever?

‘No, like we’ve been telling you, he’s a magician, he drives out demons by the power of Satan.’

This was no small charge. It carried the death penalty. But it wasn't time yet. So Jesus wipes the floor with them.

One. 'Why on earth would Satan drive himself out? Your suggestion is ludicrous.' Cold hard logic. And incidentally two English expressions were born that day. You might know them 'A house divided against itself cannot stand' and 'United we stand divided we fall.'

Two. 'But while we're talking about kingdoms. Yes I am driving out the kingdom of the prince of this world and bringing in the kingdom of God. Exactly what the Messiah is prophesied to do.'

Three. 'And if as you say, I were driving demons out by Satan, then are woundn't



your own Jewish exorcists be guilty of the same charge?’

Four. But you are right in your reasoning. I’m either doing this by the power of Satan or the power of God. But consider, if not by Satan, then I’m doing this by the Spirit of God which means the kingdom of God has come upon you, and I am who these people are saying I am.’

Five. ‘And I’m not doing this by Satan. Think about it. No one can come in and plunder Satan’s house, cast out his demons as I’ve just done, unless that person first binds Satan in his own house. Like I have done.’

It’s never a great idea to get into a debate with Jesus. It never ends well. Usually just red-faced silence and shame.

A couple of quick points to note before you think about this on your own. Firstly, from the perspective of history, here we have a record of Jesus' enemies clearly acknowledging his miraculous deeds. What does this say? Secular literature also describes Jesus as a miracle worker. Because he was. Secondly, it's a chilling thought isn't it that Jesus speaks of this poor man, and by extension our world, as Satan's house. Once Satan is bound, Jesus drives out Satan's demonic influence, freeing and cleansing his house. That's the kingdom of God in a nutshell right there.

## **Think**

There is plenty of food for thought in the above so please take some time now to

consider this passage on your own. Perhaps consider the irony of both the religious establishment and Satan himself teaming up to oppose Jesus – sin runs that deep in our world. Then consider the authority and power in both Jesus' words and his works in this passage. You might think even more deeply about the ongoing influence of sin, Satan and demons over our culture today. We are all guilty because of our individual sins, we can't blame Satan for these; think perhaps of the demonic realm as laying further traps and snares and pouring fuel onto the fire that's already burning dangerously enough on its own.

## **Pray**

Then praise Jesus for who he has revealed

himself to be in our passage today and his complete authority over Satan's domain. Through Jesus Satan and his demons have absolutely no power over us, and through what Jesus has done for us neither does sin or even death. Praise him, thank him, follow him.