

## IF SATAN CAST OUT SATAN

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*Lessons: Matthew 12:14-30, Arcana Coelestia 1749:3*

In the lesson we read from the New Testament, we are told how the Pharisees tried to destroy the work of the Lord while He lived in the world. The Pharisees were leaders of the church at that time. Many of them were evil men who liked to have power over other people; tell them what to do; and to be obeyed and praised. These Pharisees were afraid that the Lord would take their power away, for He taught that only the Lord should have power and tell people what to do and that only He should be obeyed and praised.

Because they were afraid of the Lord's teachings, they hated Him. They tried to undo His work with the people whenever they could. In the lesson we are told one of the ways they tried to do this. They told people that the Lord was able to cast out evil spirits only because He had the worst evil spirit in Him. They said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils except by Be-el-ze-bub, the prince of the devils" (Matthew 12:24). Now, this was a terrible thing to say about the Lord—the Lord who had come into the world to save people from all evil spirits.

The Lord had come to save people from evil spirits, because those spirits had become very strong. At the time when the Lord lived evil spirits could come right inside a person and make him do terrible things, and even make him insane. Of course the Lord didn't want this to go on any longer. So He came to make evil spirits leave the people alone who wanted to do what is right. He cast out evil spirits from many people. And other people saw Him do it—saw Him make men and women and even children, who had been possessed by evil spirits, completely well again. So it was that multitudes came to believe in the Lord.

But the Pharisees did not want the people to believe in the Lord. They wanted to control everyone, and make them do what they wanted. So they told that lie about the Lord. "This fellow doth not cast out devils except by Be-el-ze-bub, the prince of the devils." By this they meant that the Lord had power over evil because He Himself was evil.

As all other evil spirits, Be-el-ze-bub was once a man (*True Christian Religion* 292). He had been evil on earth, and so when he went into the other world he became an evil spirit. He must have been a very evil man for he was worshiped as a god—and men did many wrong things in his name. He is mentioned a number of times in both the Old and the New Testaments. His name means

“god of the flies”. And in the spiritual sense this means “god of all falsities” (*Apocalypse Explained* 740:10).

Now, what are falsities? Falsities are the opposite of truths. The telling of lies is one kind of falsity. Pretending something that is not really true is another kind of falsity. But the worst kind is the falsities, which make us think that doing something wrong is all right. Such falsities can and do lead us into doing evil. They are always from evil spirits like Be-el-ze-bub.

When the Pharisees said that the Lord was able to cast out devils only because He had Be-el-ze-bub’s power, they were saying that the Lord cast out evil spirits only because He wanted to use falsities to trick people into following Him. You see, the Pharisees could not understand the Lord’s love for people. They did not love them, but only wanted to make them obey and do as they said. The Pharisees thought the Lord wanted to do the same thing to people: *make* them follow Him and obey Him.

But the Lord’s love is so wonderful that He never *makes* anyone do anything. He wants us to be free to make up our own minds, Of course He *wants* us to obey Him and follow Him, but He does not *make* us do it. Why then, did the Lord come to cast out evil spirits? Because the evil spirits, just like the Pharisees, wanted to trick the people into obeying them—obeying them in doing what is wrong. People were no longer free to make up their own minds when evil spirits could come to them and make them do evil, so the Lord cast out these spirits in order that every person might be free. And the Lord did this His whole life, so that when it was time for Him to go back to heaven, the terrible power of evil had been broken and people were free again.

The Lord showed why He cast out evil spirits when He answered the Pharisees. Remember, they had said that He cast out devils by Be-el-ze-bub the prince of the devils. He answered, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?” (Matthew 12:26). By this the Lord, clearly showed that all evil and false things work together and not against each other. Evil spirits work together against a person. You know this well. If a bad thought comes into your mind and you do not push it away, then it is not long before other bad thoughts come. You can see this with wicked people too. Of course they may quarrel among themselves, but if a good person comes along the wicked work together against him. “If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How shall then his kingdom stand?”

With this answer the Lord showed that if He were working through Be-el-ze-bub, He would never cast evil spirits out of people. Instead He would call other satans in. The Pharisees could not respond when the Lord answered them in this way. This happened every time they lied about the Lord or tried to trap

Him with their questions. His answers were always so completely true that they were speechless.

After answering them, the Lord explained how He cast out evil spirits. “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matthew 12:28). These are wonderful words! The Lord cast out evil spirits by the power of *Divine truth*—the Spirit of God. (*Apocalypse Explained* 740:10). Evil spirits cannot stand the Lord’s truth. When it comes near to them they have to flee away. When He was on earth, all He had to do was speak the truth and the spirits had to leave—even leave the people whom, they had possessed. This is how He cast evil spirits out of people.

And He still does the same thing today. He still chases evil spirits away with His truth. The only difference between now and when He lived in the world is that now He works through us. He gives us His truth and we are to use it in getting rid of the spirits who try to get us to think and do wrong things. How does He give us His truth? *In His Word*. His Word is all truth, and the evil spirits cannot stand it. When a bad thought or wrong desire comes into your mind, all you have to do is think of something from His Word, or better still—go to His Word and read it. Then the spirits who sent that wrong thing to your mind will have to leave. This is a sure promise of the Lord. Oh, yes, the evil spirits will come back later, for they are stubborn and want to lead everyone into evil. But all you have to do is the same thing over again, and they will have to leave again. If you keep this up, they will get tired at last and will leave you alone. “Then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” The Lord’s kingdom will surround you with its protection. And no spirits such as Be-el-ze-bub will have any power over you, but will be cast out by the Lord’s truth—the Lord’s truth, which you have freely used. *Amen*.