

Jesus Casts Out Devils

Key Verse: *“If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”*
—*Matthew 12:28*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 12:22-28

THE THOUGHT GENERALLY deduced from Jesus’ statement in our Key Verse by many who consider the Holy Spirit to be a personality and part of a triune God, is that the Holy Spirit is of greater importance than either the Father or the Son. However, we should realize, first of all, that the Scriptures clearly teach that there is “but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, ... and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.” (I Cor. 8:6) The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is not a personality at all, but is the invisible influence and power of God, as it works in all the various arrangements of his plan, and as it represents his character attributes of wisdom, justice, power, and love.—Job 12:13; Ps. 89:14; II Tim. 1:7; I John 4:16

From the context of our lesson, we notice that Jesus had just used the divine power of the Holy Spirit, conferred upon him by the Father, to cast out a devil. (Matt. 12:22) The Pharisees, who saw the miracle and could not deny it, sought to turn aside its force by claiming that it was performed by Satanic power. In reply to them our Lord distinctly disclaimed the power he used as being his own, and asserted that it was the “Spirit of God.” He also reasoned with them that if “Satan cast out Satan,” his kingdom would surely not stand.—vs. 26

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for being so malicious as to attribute an evil source to that which they could not deny was a good work. There was no evidence of sin, selfishness, or even ambition in the miracle he had performed. Later in the same chapter, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees saying: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”—vs. 34

Our Lord pointed out further, that although the Pharisees had not personally sinned against Jehovah or himself, they had blasphemed against the divine power, the Holy Spirit, which was operating in him. For them to have misunderstood and misrepresented the invisible God would have been a lighter offense. Similarly, to have spoken evil of Jesus and to have misinterpreted his motives, claiming that he was merely trying to usurp a throne and to exalt himself to power, would also have been a less serious sin.

However, the Pharisees’ committed a much greater sin because they had witnessed with their own eyes the manifestation of divine power performing a good deed for the relief of one of their fellow human beings who was suffering in the grip of Satan. For them to blaspheme against this holy power meant a degree of wickedness and animosity of heart of a much deeper degree than either of the other offenses would have implied.—Matt. 12:31,32

We recall the words, “Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life,” and, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34) These are important lessons for the Christian because the great Adversary is continually doing battle with us in our minds. Therefore, let us seek each day to continue the work of transforming ourselves by the renewing of our mind, that we “may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:2 ■