

Miracles: The Power of Satan or the Finger of God?

by Clarence R. Johnson

In Matthew 9:32-34, Matthew records, "As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.' "

Glancing back over the last few chapters, Matthew has told us of the cleansing of a leper, the healing of the paralyzed servant of a Roman centurion, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law who was sick with a high fever, the calming of a storm at sea, the freeing of two demon-possessed men who had been extremely wild and dangerous before Jesus freed them from demon-possession, the raising of a girl from the dead, the healing of the woman who had had a flow of blood for 12 years, the healing of two blind men, and numerous others who came to Him -- and now this freeing of the mute who had been demon possessed. No wonder the multitudes marveled "It was never seen like this in Israel!"

But even in the light of Jesus' marvelous accomplishments, He always had His detractors. "The Pharsisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.' "

Luke 11:14-23 shows that still others came, asking for a sign from heaven. Indeed, after all the miracles He had worked in the immediate setting, what else could He have done to prove He came from heaven?

In fact, as He defended Himself against the charge of using Satanic powers He reasoned that Satan certainly would not cast out demons. To do so would be to work against himself. Not only that, but the sons of the Pharisees -- perhaps a reference to their disciples -- also cast out demons, or at least claimed to do so. By whose power did they seek to overcome Satan? The only logical conclusion -- the necessary inference -- was that Jesus was operating by the power of God, and the logical application of that realization was that the very reign of God Himself was evident in Jesus' ministry: "If I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Luke 11:20)

Finally, Jesus further illustrates this principle with a parable. The only one who can throw a strong man out of his palace is an even stronger man than the first. Likewise, the only one who could cast demons out of their dwelling place would be someone who possesses a power greater than even the prince of the demons. Only the power of God would suffice. Jesus did it with "the finger of God."

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